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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## STATE-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCE AMONG YOUNG WOMEN IN INDIA

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#### Abstract

Women's education is a key driver of social and economic development in India. While existing studies mainly focus on literacy levels and educational attainment, limited attention has been given to the stability of progress over time. This study addresses this gap by introducing a resilience-based approach to examine women's education across Indian states, with a focus on young women aged 15–29 years. Using state-level panel data, the study moves beyond static averages to analyse both the level and consistency of literacy outcomes. Descriptive statistics reveal significant inter-state disparities, with some states recording high average literacy alongside large variations over time. To capture stability, a resilience index based on the coefficient of variation is used, where lower variation indicates stronger resilience. The results show that higher literacy levels do not necessarily correspond to stable progress, highlighting the importance of examining volatility alongside performance. Further, inter state inequality is analysed through dispersion trends, which indicate a gradual but uneven process of convergence across states. Regional analysis reveals distinct patterns, with the South and North-East regions showing relatively stable progress, while the Central and Northern regions exhibit higher volatility and persistent disparities. Cluster based grouping of states identified different educational regimes, reflecting diverse development pathways. Overall, the study demonstrates that improvements in women's education in India are neither uniform nor consistently resilient. By incorporating stability into the analysis, it provides a more nuanced understanding of educational development and highlights the need for region-specific and continuity-focused policy interventions.

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#### Introduction:-

Women's education is one of the most important factors for the development of a country like India. When girls are educated, they can improve not only their own lives but also the lives of their families and future generations (Nussbaum, 2004; Mukherjee, 2006). Education gives girls the knowledge and skills they need to make better decisions, stay healthy, and become independent (Shetty and Hans, 2015). Over the past few decades, India has made strong efforts to increase access to education for girls, leading to improved participation (Sharmila and Dhas,

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2010). However, this progress is not uniform across all regions (Kamat, 1976). Education plays a key role in improving health and overall well-being. Educated girls are more aware of hygiene, nutrition, and healthcare, which improves both their own health and that of their families (Cremin and Nakabugo, 2012). Education also contributes to delayed marriages and better maternal health outcomes (Tarabini, 2010). In this way, women's education creates long-term social benefits. Another important benefit of education is better employment opportunities. Educated women are more likely to participate in the workforce and earn independent incomes, contributing to

economic development (Benham, 1974; Women's Education and Economic Well-Being, n.d.). This economic independence reduces poverty and enhances living standards (Guisan et al., 2015). In today's knowledge-based economy, education is essential for young women's success. Education also plays a crucial role in empowering women. It increases confidence, awareness of rights, and participation in decision-making processes (Shetty and Hans, 2015). Educated women are more capable of challenging social inequalities and contributing to a more just society (Nussbaum, 2004). Despite progress, there are significant regional differences in women's education in India. Some states have achieved high levels of literacy and participation, while others continue to face barriers such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, and social constraints (Mukherjee, 2006). These disparities highlight the need to study not only levels of education but also the consistency of progress over time. Most studies focus on the level of education at a particular point in time.

However, it is also important to understand whether progress is stable over time. This concept is linked to educational stability and resilience. Educational resilience refers to the ability of individuals or systems to maintain progress despite challenges (Das, 2019; Chakradhar et al., 2023). In the context of education, it means that progress continues even under adverse conditions. Resilience has been widely studied in different social and psychological contexts. Studies show that resilience helps individuals cope with stress, disadvantage, and difficult environments (Dale et al., 2014; Mishra and Sondhi, 2019). In India, research has also highlighted resilience among disadvantaged groups and young women, showing its importance for long-term development (Mathias et al., 2018; Das, 2019). Similarly, resilience among youth is influenced by social, emotional, and environmental factors (Singh and Singh, 2021; Young, 2024). When applied to education, resilience reflects whether educational progress is consistent and sustained. A state may achieve high literacy at one time but fail to maintain it, indicating weak resilience. On the other hand, steady improvement over time reflects a strong and stable education system. The main aim of this study is to compare different states in India and examine how stable their progress in women's education has been over time. Instead of focusing only on average literacy levels, the study emphasizes consistency and resilience in educational progress. It seeks to identify states that show steady improvement and those that experience fluctuations. Overall, this study highlights that women's education is not just about increasing numbers but also about maintaining consistent progress over time. By examining stability and resilience, policymakers can better understand regional disparities and design more effective strategies to ensure equitable and sustained educational development for young women in India.

### **Literature Review:-**

Women's education has been widely studied as an important factor for social and economic development in a country like India. Many researchers have shown that improving education among women leads to better health, higher income, and greater equality in society. Earlier studies mainly focused on increasing literacy rates and school enrollment among girls. These studies highlight that government policies, awareness programs, and improved school facilities have helped raise the level of education among women over time. Several studies explain that educated women contribute positively to family welfare. They are more likely to ensure proper nutrition, healthcare, and education for their children. This creates a cycle of development where one generation supports the next. Researchers have also found that women's education reduces poverty and increases participation in the workforce. Because of these benefits, many policies in India have focused on promoting girls' education, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas.

Another important area of research looks at differences between states. Studies show that some states have performed much better than others in terms of female literacy and school participation. For example, southern states have generally achieved higher literacy rates due to better infrastructure, awareness, and government support. In contrast, some northern and central states still face challenges such as poverty, social barriers, and lack of access to quality education. These differences show that women's education in India does not follow a single pattern but varies across regions. Most of the existing literature focuses on the level of education at a particular point in time. Researchers often compare literacy rates or enrollment levels across states or over years. While this helps in

understanding overall progress, it does not fully explain whether this progress is stable or not. A state may show improvement in one period but may not maintain it in the long run. This creates gaps in understanding the consistency of educational development. Some recent studies have started looking beyond simple averages and have tried to understand changes over time. These studies use time-based data to observe whether educational outcomes are improving steadily or showing fluctuations. However, very few studies have focused specifically on the idea of stability or resilience in women's education. The concept of resilience refers to the ability of a system to maintain progress even when there are challenges such as economic changes or policy shifts.

In the context of education, resilience means that improvements in literacy and learning outcomes should continue in a smooth and consistent manner. If a state shows high variation in its progress, it may indicate instability in its education system. On the other hand, steady progress suggests that the system is strong and well-supported. Despite its importance, this aspect has not been widely explored in the literature on women's education in India. Therefore, there is a need to study not only how much progress has been made but also how stable that progress is over time. Understanding both the level and consistency of education can provide a more complete picture. It can help identify which states are truly improving and which ones are facing hidden challenges. This study builds on earlier research by introducing the idea of educational resilience. It aims to examine how women's education has changed over time across different states and whether this change is stable. By focusing on both performance and stability, the study adds a new dimension to the existing literature and helps in better understanding the nature of educational development among young women in India.

### **Data and Methodology:-**

This study is based on secondary data obtained from the EPWRF India Time Series Database. The dataset is constructed at the state level and spans the period from 1996 to 2023, enabling an analysis of changes over time. The primary variable used in this study is derived from the level of education category, specifically the total number of literate women in the age group 15–29 years. This age group is particularly important as it represents young women who are either completing their education or entering the workforce. The selected variable provides a useful measure to assess the educational status and progress of young women across different states. To analyse the data, simple descriptive statistics are used first. These include measures like average (mean) and standard deviation. The average shows the general level of literacy in each state, while the standard deviation shows how much variation exists. This helps in comparing states and identifying differences in their performance. In addition to this, the study introduces the idea of educational resilience. Resilience here means how stable the progress in literacy is over time. To measure this, the coefficient of variation (CV) is used. The CV shows how much fluctuation exists in literacy rates over the years. A lower CV means that the literacy rate is more stable and consistent, while a higher CV means more variation and instability. In this study, resilience is measured as the inverse of volatility, which means lower variation indicates higher resilience.

The study also uses clustering techniques to group states based on their literacy levels and stability. Methods such as k-means clustering and hierarchical clustering are used. These methods help in identifying groups of states that show similar patterns. For example, some states may have high literacy and high stability, while others may have low literacy but stable progress. Grouping states in this way helps in understanding different patterns of educational development. Finally, a comparative analysis is done across major regions of India, such as the North, South, East, West, Central, and North-East. This helps in identifying regional differences in women's education. By comparing regions, the study highlights which areas are performing better and which areas need more attention. Overall, this methodology helps in going beyond simple literacy levels and focuses on how consistent and stable educational progress is across different states.

### **Results and Discussion:-**

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of women's education for the age group 15–29 years across states in India over the period 1996–2023. The variable used represents the total number of literate women, and hence the values reflect levels rather than percentages.

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Literate Women (Age 15–29)**

State	Mean	SD	Min	Max
AllIndia	111	64.6	10.1	197
Andhra Pradesh	105	60.5	9.2	209
Assam	106	53	18.3	174
Bihar	133	81.5	8.1	241
Chhattisgarh	133	79.7	10.8	257
Delhi	54.1	52.2	2	136
Gujarat	117	73.6	8.2	211
Haryana	125	83.5	2.1	271
HimachalPradesh	101	70.1	7.3	227
Jammuand Kashmir	56.8	46.3	2.5	143
Jharkhand	115	66.7	10.3	216
Karnataka	103	60.5	6.9	189
Kerala	89.7	53.5	4.8	150
MadhyaPradesh	145	85.7	11.6	266
Maharashtra	108	67.9	4.8	234
Odisha	104	62.9	7.1	187
Punjab	90.8	64.3	4	182
Rajasthan	131	80	8	239
TamilNadu	94.7	58.1	5.7	180
Telangana	57.3	51.9	6.1	145
Uttarakhand	129	84.4	7.9	277
UttarPradesh	77.5	57.4	2.4	159
West Bengal	97.9	46.1	22.5	1

The mean values indicate substantial variation across states. States such as Madhya Pradesh (145), Bihar (133), Chhattisgarh (133), and Rajasthan (131) report relatively higher averages, reflecting a larger number of literate young women over the study period. In contrast, states such as Delhi (54.1), Telangana (57.3), and Jammu and Kashmir (56.8) exhibit lower mean values. These differences are partly influenced by variations in population size as well as differences in educational expansion across states. The standard deviation (SD) highlights the extent of variation over time. Several states, including Madhya Pradesh (85.7), Haryana (83.5), Uttarakhand (84.4), and Bihar (81.5), show high SD values, indicating significant fluctuations in the number of literate women and suggesting instability in educational progress. On the other hand, states such as Assam (53.0), Kerala (53.5), and West Bengal (46.1) display relatively lower SD values, reflecting more consistent trends over time.

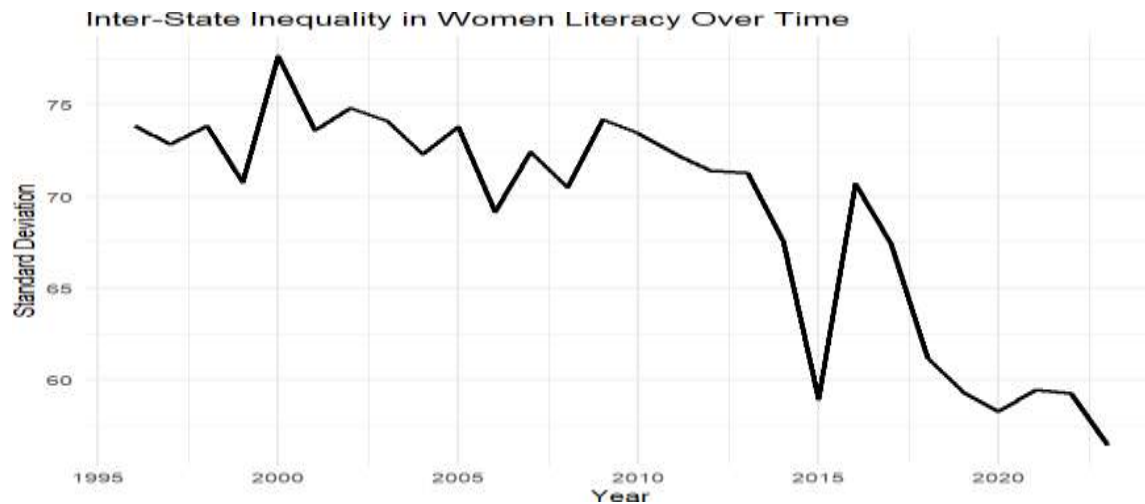
The minimum and maximum values further illustrate wide disparities in literacy levels across periods. Extremely low minimum values in several states indicate weak initial conditions, while high maximum values reflect periods of rapid expansion. Overall, the descriptive statistics reveal that women's education in India is characterized by considerable inter-state variation not only in levels but also in temporal stability, underscoring the importance of analysing both magnitude and consistency of educational outcomes.

#### **Inter-State Inequality in Women's Literacy Over Time**

The graph shows how inequality in women's literacy across states in India has changed over time. Inequality is measured using the standard deviation. A higher value means greater differences between states, while a lower value means states are becoming more similar. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the standard deviation is quite high, mostly between 72 and 78. This indicates that there were large differences in literacy levels among states during this period. Some states were performing very well, while others were far behind. This reflects uneven development in

women's education across regions. From around 2005 to 2012, the graph shows moderate fluctuations, but the overall level of inequality remains high. Although some improvement is visible, the gap between states is still significant. This suggests that progress in women's education was happening, but not equally across all states. A noticeable change occurs after 2013. The standard deviation starts to decline, indicating a reduction in inequality. The sharp drop around 2015 shows a sudden improvement, where states became more similar in terms of literacy levels. However, this drop is followed by a temporary increase, suggesting that the improvement was not fully stable.

After 2016, there is a clear downward trend. The standard deviation continues to decrease, reaching its lowest levels by the early 2020s. This means that differences between states are reducing over time. In simple terms, states are becoming more similar in their performance in women's education.



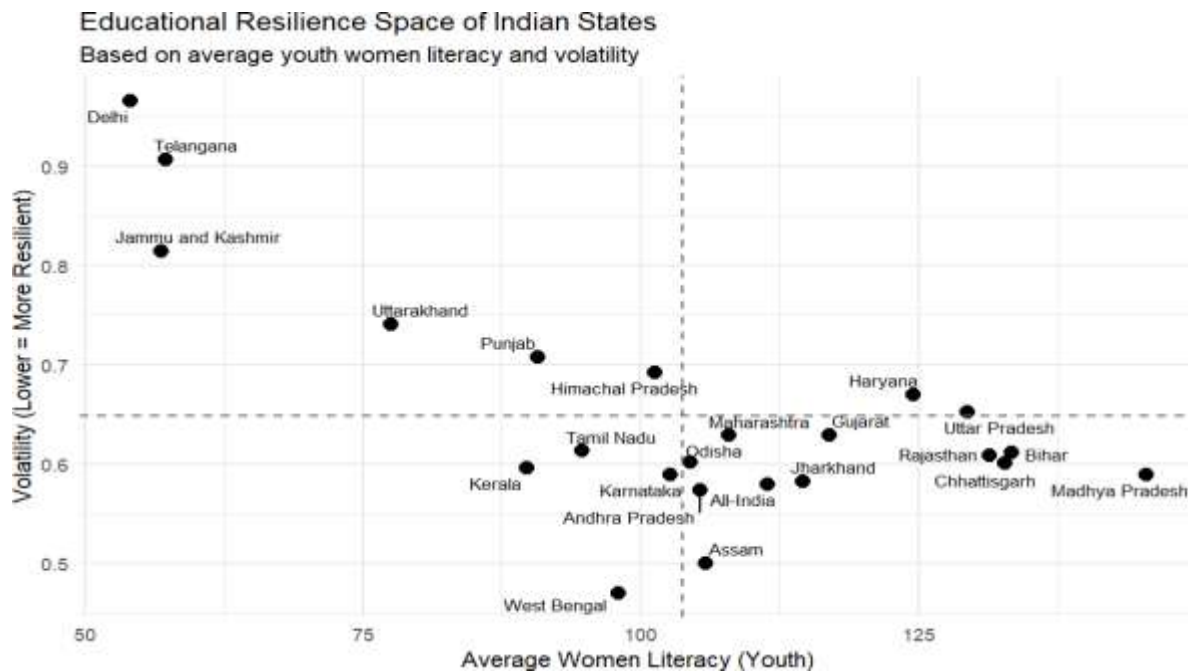
**Figure 1: Interstate inequality in women from 1996–2023**

This trend suggests a slow movement towards convergence, where less developed states are catching up with better-performing ones. However, the fluctuations in between (especially the spike after 2015) show that progress is not perfectly smooth. There are periods of instability, which may be due to policy changes, economic conditions, or other external factors. Overall, the graph highlights two important points: (a) inequality in women's literacy across states has reduced over time, (b) the progress has been uneven and sometimes unstable. This supports the idea that while India has made progress in improving women's education, the journey has not been consistent. Therefore, it is important to focus not only on improving literacy levels but also on ensuring stable and continuous progress across all states.

### **Educational Resilience Across States**

The graph shows the relationship between average women's literacy and stability (resilience) across states in India. The horizontal axis represents the average literacy level of young women (15–29 years), while the vertical axis shows volatility. Since volatility is shown as "lower = more resilient," states lower on the graph are more stable in their progress over time. The graph is divided into four parts using dashed lines, which help us understand different types of state performance. First, the top-left section includes states like Delhi, Telangana, and Jammu and Kashmir. These states have low literacy levels but relatively high stability. This means their performance is consistent over time, but the overall level of education remains low. In simple terms, they are stable but not progressing much. Second, the top-right section includes states such as Haryana and Gujarat. These states have high literacy but also high volatility. This means they have achieved good levels of education, but their progress is not stable. There are ups and downs over time, suggesting that improvements may not be fully secure.

Third, the bottom-left section includes states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. These states show moderate literacy with low volatility, which indicates strong resilience. Their progress is steady and consistent, making them good examples of balanced educational development.



**Figure 2: Educational resilience space of Indian states**

Finally, the bottom-right section includes states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. These states have high literacy levels with moderate stability. While they have improved significantly, some fluctuations still exist, suggesting that their progress is still stabilizing. An important observation from the graph is that higher literacy does not always mean higher resilience. Some states with high literacy still show instability, while some states with lower literacy are more stable. This highlights the importance of looking beyond averages and focusing on consistency over time. The position of “All-India” lies near the center, indicating an overall moderate level of literacy and stability. This suggests that while the country is improving, there are still differences between states. Overall, the graph clearly shows that states follow different paths in women’s education. Some are stable but slow, some are fast but unstable, and some are balanced. This supports the idea that education progress in India is not uniform and requires state-specific policies.

### Regional Volatility in Women’s Literacy

The figure presents regional differences in volatility in women’s literacy across India. Volatility, measured through standard deviation, reflects the stability of educational progress over time, where lower values indicate greater resilience. The Central region shows the highest volatility, suggesting that improvements in women’s literacy have been uneven and inconsistent. Similarly, the North region also exhibits relatively high volatility, pointing to fluctuations in progress and weaker stability. These patterns indicate that despite some gains, educational outcomes in these regions are not firmly sustained.

The West and East regions display moderate levels of volatility. This suggests that while there has been noticeable progress in women’s literacy, it has not been entirely stable. Periods of improvement may have been followed by slowdowns or temporary setbacks. In contrast, the South region demonstrates lower volatility, indicating more consistent and steady progress in educational outcomes. The North-East region records the lowest volatility among all regions, reflecting the highest level of educational resilience. This suggests that improvements in literacy in this region have been more uniform over time.

Overall, the results highlight clear regional disparities in both performance and stability. Regions with higher volatility require stronger and more consistent policy support, while more stable regions provide useful examples of sustained educational development.

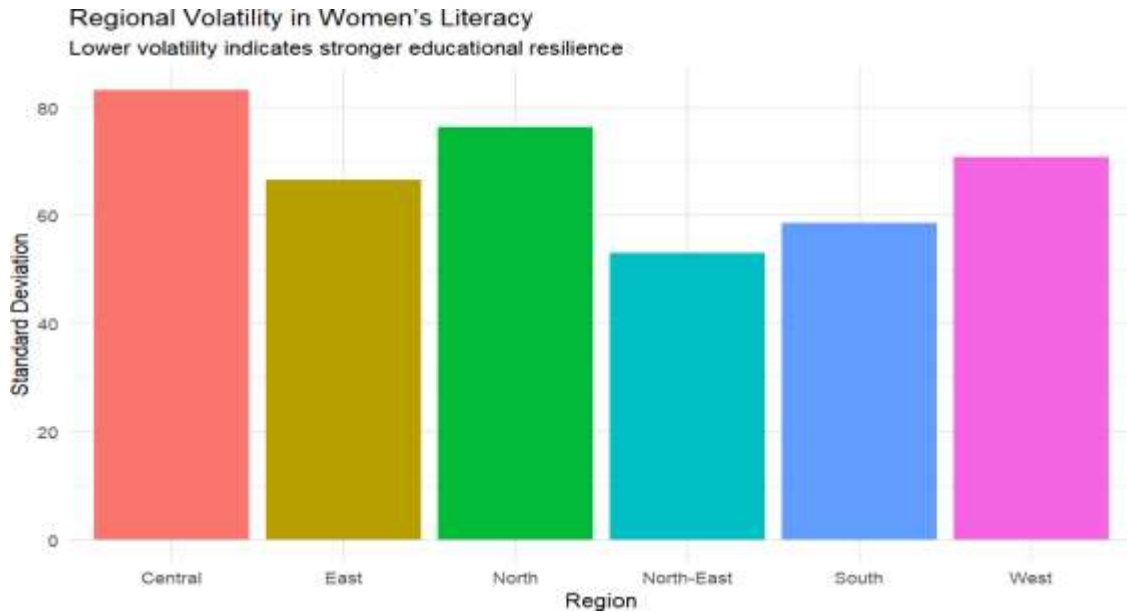


Figure 3: Regional volatility in women's literacy in India

**Regional Convergence and Divergence**

The figure shows trends in inter-state dispersion in women's literacy across regions of India over time. Dispersion indicates inequality, where higher values reflect greater differences between states and lower values suggest convergence. The Central region consistently shows the highest dispersion, especially in the early 2000s, indicating strong divergence and unequal progress among its states. Although dispersion declines after 2015, it remains relatively high. The North region also exhibits high but gradually declining dispersion, suggesting slow convergence over time.

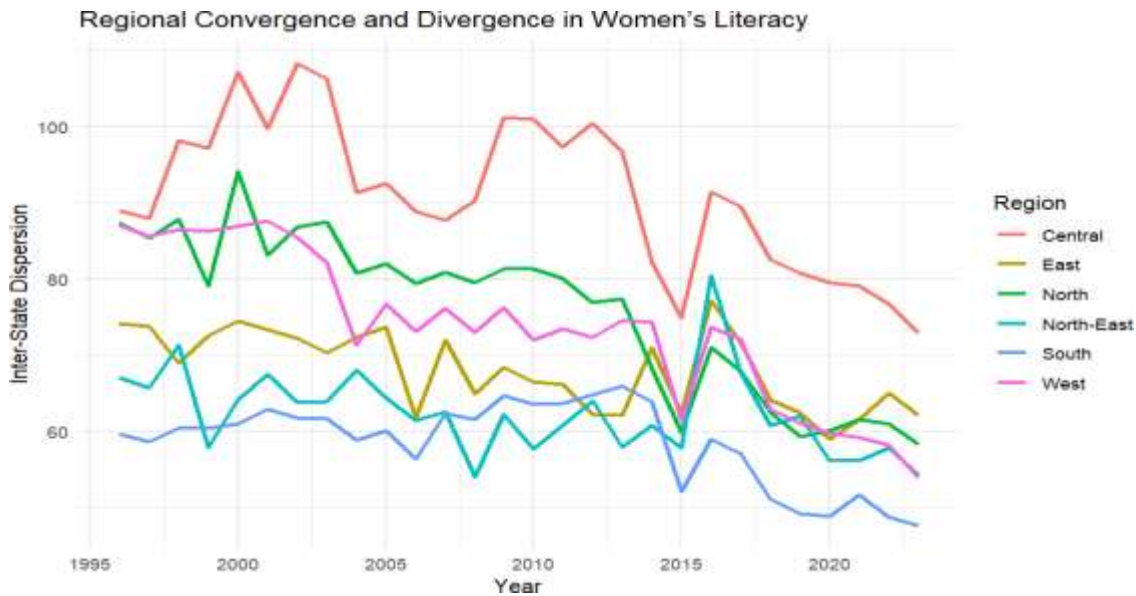


Figure 4: Regional convergence and divergence in women's literacy in India

The East and West regions display moderate levels of dispersion, with noticeable fluctuations. Both regions show some improvement after 2015, indicating partial convergence, though not fully stable. The North-East region shows relatively lower dispersion compared to others, but with sharp fluctuations, especially around the mid-2010s, suggesting periods of instability. The South region consistently records the lowest dispersion throughout the period. This indicates stronger convergence and more uniform progress in women's literacy among southern states. A key feature across all regions is the sharp dip around 2015, followed by temporary spikes, reflecting short-term shocks or policy effects. After this period, most regions show a declining trend in dispersion, suggesting gradual convergence. Overall, the results indicate that while regional inequalities in women's literacy are reducing, the pace and stability of convergence differ significantly across regions.

### **Discussion:-**

The results across all figures provide a comprehensive picture of women's education in India by combining three key aspects: levels (mean literacy), inequality (dispersion), and stability (resilience). Together, they show that while India has made clear progress in improving women's education, the pattern of growth has been uneven and sometimes unstable across states and regions. The table results indicate that several states report high average literacy levels but also high standard deviations. This means that although progress has been achieved, it has not been consistent over time. Such patterns suggest that improvements may be driven by short-term initiatives rather than long-term structural change. This aligns with the policy shift from access-focused programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to quality and continuity-focused programmes such as Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, which aim to ensure sustained educational outcomes rather than one-time improvements.

The time-series figure on inter-state inequality shows a gradual decline in dispersion, especially after 2015, indicating slow convergence among states. This trend reflects the impact of national-level initiatives such as the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan and targeted interventions for girls' education like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao. These programmes have focused on improving enrollment, retention, and awareness, particularly in lagging regions. However, the presence of fluctuations and temporary spikes suggests that policy impacts are not always stable and may vary across time and regions. The educational resilience scatter plot highlights that higher literacy does not necessarily mean greater stability. Some states with high literacy levels still show high volatility, indicating fragile progress. In contrast, certain states with moderate literacy demonstrate strong stability. This reflects differences in institutional strength, governance, and policy implementation. States like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, often associated with better educational outcomes, have benefited from long-term investments in public education, social awareness, and inclusive policies. This supports the idea that consistent policy implementation is more important than short-term gains.

Regional analysis further strengthens this argument. The North-East and South regions show lower volatility, indicating stronger educational resilience. These regions have benefited from relatively better continuity in policy implementation and community participation. In contrast, the Central and Northern regions exhibit high volatility, suggesting uneven progress. This may be linked to socio-economic challenges, infrastructure gaps, and weaker institutional capacity in these areas. Policies such as National Education Policy 2020 emphasize reducing such disparities by promoting inclusive and region-specific strategies. The regional convergence graph shows that while inequality is declining across most regions, the pace of convergence differs. The South shows strong and stable convergence, while the Central and North regions lag. The sharp dip around 2015 followed by fluctuations across regions may reflect transitional phases in policy implementation, data changes, or external shocks. It also indicates that policy outcomes take time to stabilize and require sustained effort. Overall, the findings suggest that India's progress in women's education is multi-dimensional. Policies have successfully improved access and overall literacy levels, but challenges remain in ensuring stability and uniform progress. The evidence highlights the need for state-specific and region-specific policy approaches, rather than a one-size-fits-all strategy. Strengthening institutional capacity, ensuring continuity in programmes, and focusing on long-term outcomes are essential for building true educational resilience.

### **CONCLUSION:-**

This study examines women's education in India through a resilience-based perspective by integrating three dimensions: average literacy, inter-state inequality, and temporal stability. Moving beyond conventional attainment measures, the analysis highlights that educational progress is not only uneven across states but also varies in its consistency over time.

The findings reveal substantial inter-state disparities in women's literacy, with several states exhibiting high average levels alongside significant volatility. This indicates that improvements are often not structurally sustained. The evidence further shows that higher literacy does not necessarily imply greater resilience, as some high-performing states continue to experience fluctuations, while others demonstrate stable but moderate progress. The analysis of inter-state dispersion suggests a gradual decline in inequality, pointing towards slow convergence across states. However, intermittent spikes indicate that this process remains unstable and sensitive to policy shifts and external factors. Regional patterns reinforce these insights. The South and North-East regions display relatively lower volatility and stronger convergence, reflecting more consistent progress. In contrast, the Central and Northern regions continue to exhibit higher dispersion and instability, highlighting persistent structural challenges.

Overall, the study underscores that women's education in India is characterized by multiple development pathways rather than a uniform national trajectory. The results emphasize the importance of incorporating stability into the assessment of educational outcomes. From a policy perspective, there is a clear need for differentiated, state-specific strategies that focus on strengthening institutional capacity and ensuring continuity in educational interventions.

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