



UNDERSTANDING THE LITERACY ALONG THE KONKAN DIVISION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ACROSS DISTRICTS

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Abstract

Education is a fundamental pillar of socio-economic upliftment that serves as a catalyst for personal development, promoting social equity and fostering economic growth. Being one of the pivotal components of social change, it brings socio-economic and cultural development to society. Data from census reports was utilized and based on that changing patterns of literacy in the Konkan region was calculated using cartographic technique. The observed data showed that compared to the state average (82.91%), the overall literacy rate in the Konkan division is much higher (86.40%). As per the 2011 census, the average literacy rate in the Konkan region was 86.40 percent, of which male literacy was 91.91 percent and female literacy was 80.80 percent. The results also reveal that coastal regions are performing better in terms of all variables of literacy (i.e. average literacy, male literacy and female literacy) compared to the other divisions of Maharashtra state. This discrepancy may be due to the increased development of coastal regions through advances in trade, transportation and communication facilities.

Keywords: literacy, Konkan region, Gender gap, coastal areas.

1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental pillar of socio-economic upliftment that serves as a catalyst for personal development, promoting social equity and fostering economic growth. Being one of

the pivotal components of social change, it brings socio-economic and cultural development to society. (Chandna,1996), it is one of the essential components of demographic studies that plays a pivotal role in social development. Education and literacy are the qualitative indicators of development that bring socio-economic and cultural development to society. Literacy is a social characteristic that has its role in demographic development, enabling individuals to effectively understand their social, political, economic and cultural environment (Singh & Sharn, 2015). It empowers individuals, promotes social progress and contributes to the financial security of a country.

Literacy in simple words can be defined as proficiency in reading and writing. According to the census year 2011, any individual aged seven and above, who has the ability to both read and write a simple message with understanding in any language, is treated as literate. Literacy and economic growth always walk side by side. Studies have revealed that a direct relationship exists between literacy and economic growth in a country (Bhattacharya, 2013). Increased literacy not only brings economic growth in a region but also contributes towards poverty reduction and promotes social progress.

Considering the importance of education, the Indian government has enacted the “Right to Education Act” for children in the age group between 6-14 years to provide free and compulsory education to all. Compared to developed nations, the status of literacy in India is highly erratic. Although since independence, the country has shown an increasing trend in literacy, the problem of illiteracy is still prevailing. In India, large-scale inter and intra-state variation can be seen in terms of literacy. (Swargiary & Roy, 2022), have examined the status of Indian literacy by employing the data from “National Survey of India's Report 2022”. He found that in the year 2022, the literacy rate in India grew by 77.7% from 74.4% in 2011 and concluded that compared to the world average where 12.5 per cent of people are illiterate the corresponding figure for India is still high at 23 percent.

Maharashtra is one of the most economically advanced states in the country. The state has shown progress in the educational sector over the past few decades. At the national level, the state is performing better in terms of average literacy. According to the 2011 census, Maharashtra had an average literacy rate of 82.91%, while the national average was 74.04%. Not only in terms of average literacy, the state outperforms in both male and female literacy rates that too are higher than the national average. Despite better literacy rates, variation can be observed at inter and intra-regional levels. While investigating the relationship between

literacy and sex ratio in Maharashtra's metropolitan districts, (Khadke & Waghmare, 2019) discovered that the two variables are significantly positively correlated in the state.

The major aim of the present research is to investigate the status of literacy along the coastal region, i.e. the Konkan division. Coastal regions are usually developed in terms of advances in trade and commerce through better transportation facilities. Future research can be carried out across coastal regions of the country to find out important reasons for a high degree of literacy along coastal regions of a country.

2. Study Region

Aptly called the coastal plain of western India, the Konkan region is located along the west coast of Maharashtra. Konkan region is famous for its scenic beaches, lush evergreen forests, delicious seafood and rich cultural heritage. It is bounded on the north side by the river Daman Ganga at Damaon, on the south by river Aghanashini, the Arabian Sea to the west and the Deccan plateau to its east. Mumbai also called the economic capital of India is the largest city in the Konkan region. Konkan region is one of the six administrative divisions of Maharashtra, possessing an area of 30,746 sq. km. Based on the 2011 census, the population of the region is 58.57 lakh, which is about 25.5% population of Maharashtra state.

3. Objective

- The major objective is to investigate the changing patterns of literacy in the Konkan region of Maharashtra.

4. Research Methodology

The database of the present research work was collected mainly from the various secondary sources, like:

- Census Reports 2011
- Statistical abstract of Maharashtra
- Research papers

Literacy data of Mumbai suburban of census 1991 was missing and it was calculated by taking the mean value of the Konkan division. Collected data was analyzed using MS Excel and descriptive statistics. By employing the use of cartographic software (like QGIS), maps were generated to present the nature of spatial variability in literacy across the study area. A quantitative method was also worked out for the analysis of changing patterns of literacy rates in the study region using the following formula,

$$\text{Literacy rate} = \frac{\text{Number of literates}}{\text{Population aged 7 and above}} \times 100$$

5. Results and discussion

5.1: The trend in literacy rate from 1991-2011

Table 1 indicates that the Konkan division shows an increased trend in terms of the average literacy rate in Maharashtra state from (1991-2011). The data shows that in 1991, the average literacy along the Konkan division was 70.9 percent which increased to 86.40 percent in the census year 2011. In the census year 2011, Spatial disparity in terms of average literacy was observed along different districts of the Konkan region in which Mumbai suburban exhibited the highest literacy rate (90.90%), followed by Mumbai city (88.48%), while as lowest literacy rate as observed in Ratnagiri district (82.43%).

Table 1: average literacy rate in Konkan division of Maharashtra.

Year	Thane	Mumbai Suburban	Mumbai	Ratnagiri	Raigad	Sindhudurg	Average
1991	69.54	70.9	82.5	62.7	63.95	75.81	70.9
2001	80.66	86.89	86.4	75.05	77.03	80.30	81.05
2011	86.18	90.90	88.48	82.43	83.89	86.54	86.40

Source: census of India.

While comparing the decadal variation in the literacy rate of Maharashtra and Konkan division from 1991-2011, it was observed that the Maharashtra state and Konkan division are showing increasing trends. During 1991-2001 Konkan division showed a decadal increase in literacy of 10.15 percent while the corresponding figure for the state was 11.75 percentage. Similarly in the decade 2001-2011, the Konkan region showed a slight increase in literacy rate of 5.35 percent compared to Maharashtra state as a whole of 6.29 percent. This marginal increase in literacy rate can be attributed to socio-economic development which has previously achieved the highest gains in literacy along the Konkan region compared to the rest parts of the state.

Table 2: Decadal comparison between Konkan division and Maharashtra

Year	1991	2001	2011
Konkan	70.9	81.05	86.40
Percentage Increase	-	10.15	5.35
Maharashtra	64.87	76.62	82.91
Percentage increase	-	11.75	6.29

Source: Census of India.

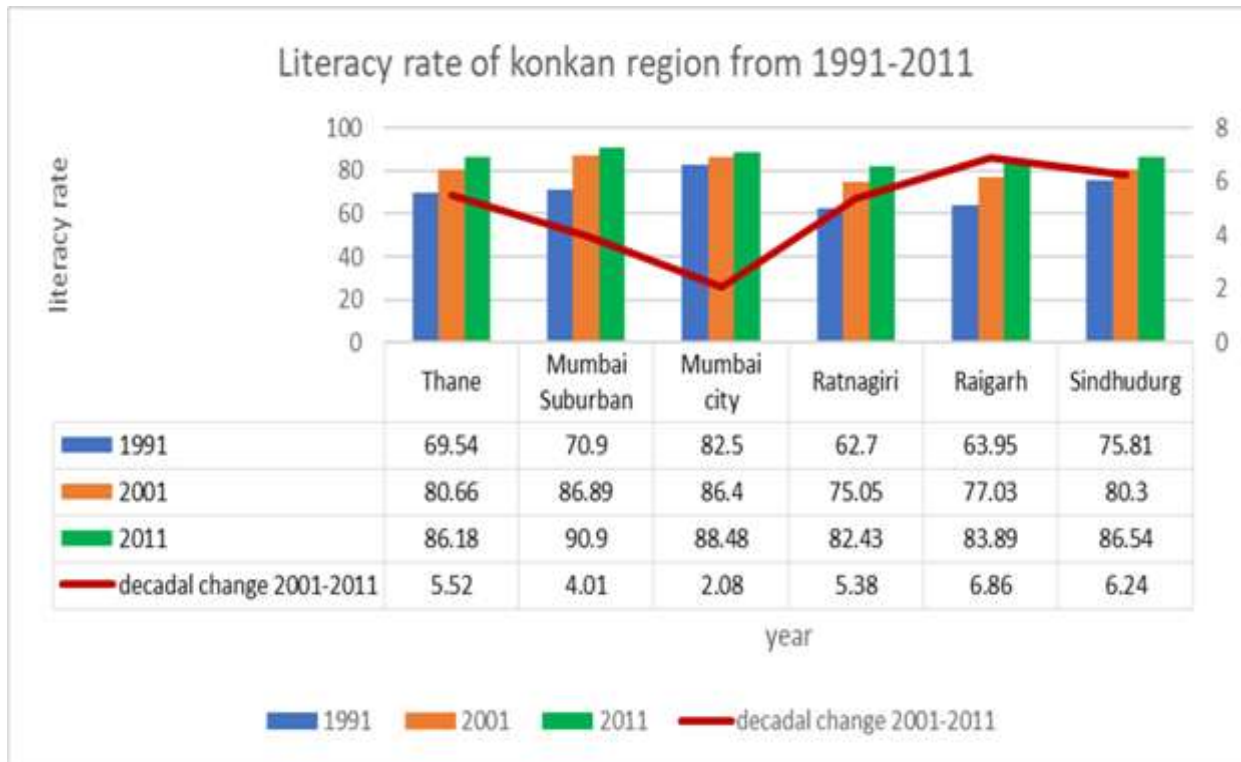
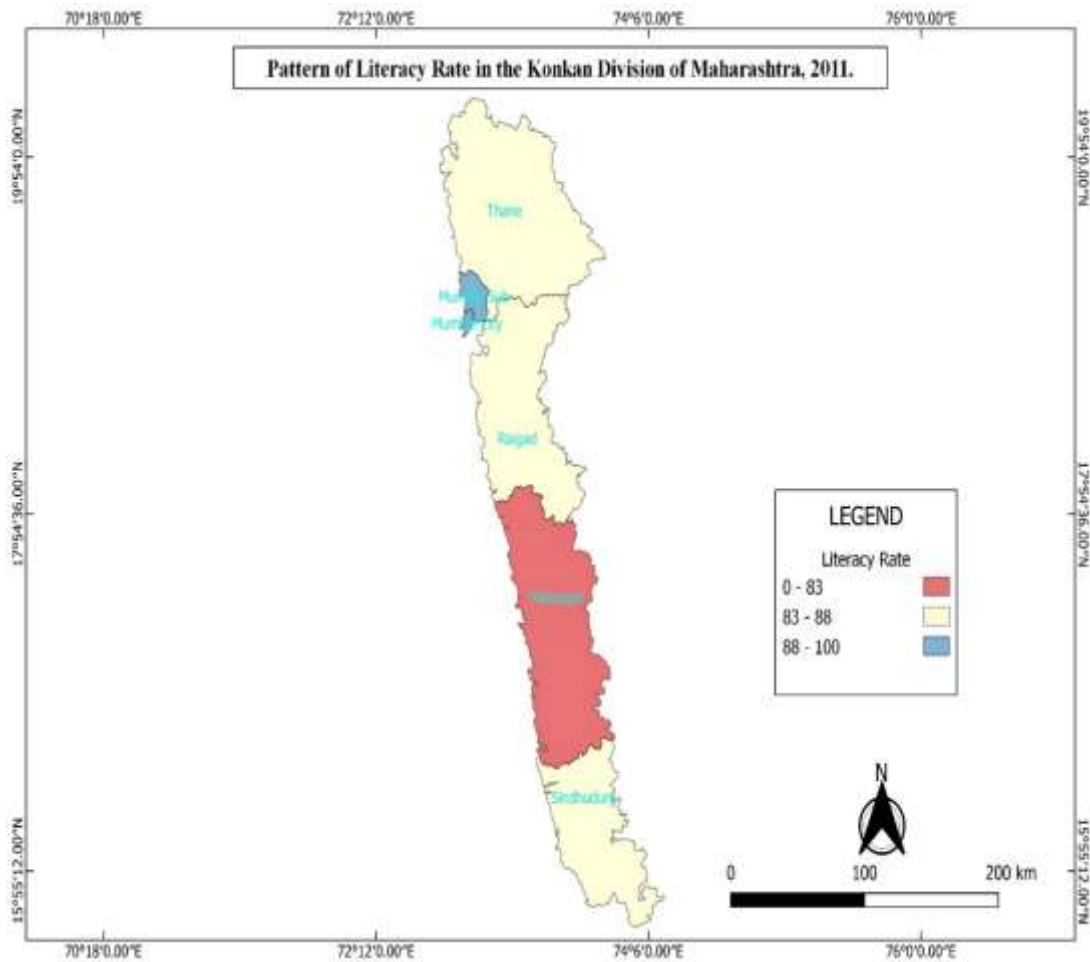


Figure 1: literacy rate of the Konkan region 199-2011

5.2: Spatial patterns of literacy in Konkan division.

As per the 2011 census, the Konkan region has an overall literacy rate of 86.40 percent which is higher than the average state's literacy. All the districts of the Konkan division except Ratnagiri have literacy higher than the average literacy rate of Maharashtra. At the district scale, one may observe spatial variations in terms of average literacy. For analyzing the degree of variability, the Konkan division has been categorized into the following three groups,

- a. **Low literacy rate:** those districts whose literacy rate is below 83 percent and included in this category. Therefore, Ratnagiri is the only district that falls under this category.
- b. **Medium literacy rate:** it includes those areas where the literacy rate is between 83-88 percent. Raigad, Thane and Sindhudurg are the districts that are considered in this category.
- c. **High literacy rate:** in this category districts whose literacy rate is above 88 percent are included. Mumbai Suburban and Mumbai City are two districts that lie in this category.

Map 1: Literacy in Konkan Region.

Source: Generated by the author.

5.3: A comparison between literacy ratios among six divisions of Maharashtra.

Comparative analysis is an essential tool that focuses on studying the spatial variability of inequality and then bridging this gap through improving its quality. In the present study, a comparison of literacy rates between six divisions of Maharashtra state has been done to explore the spatial variability, if any and highlight the areas that show a positive trend.

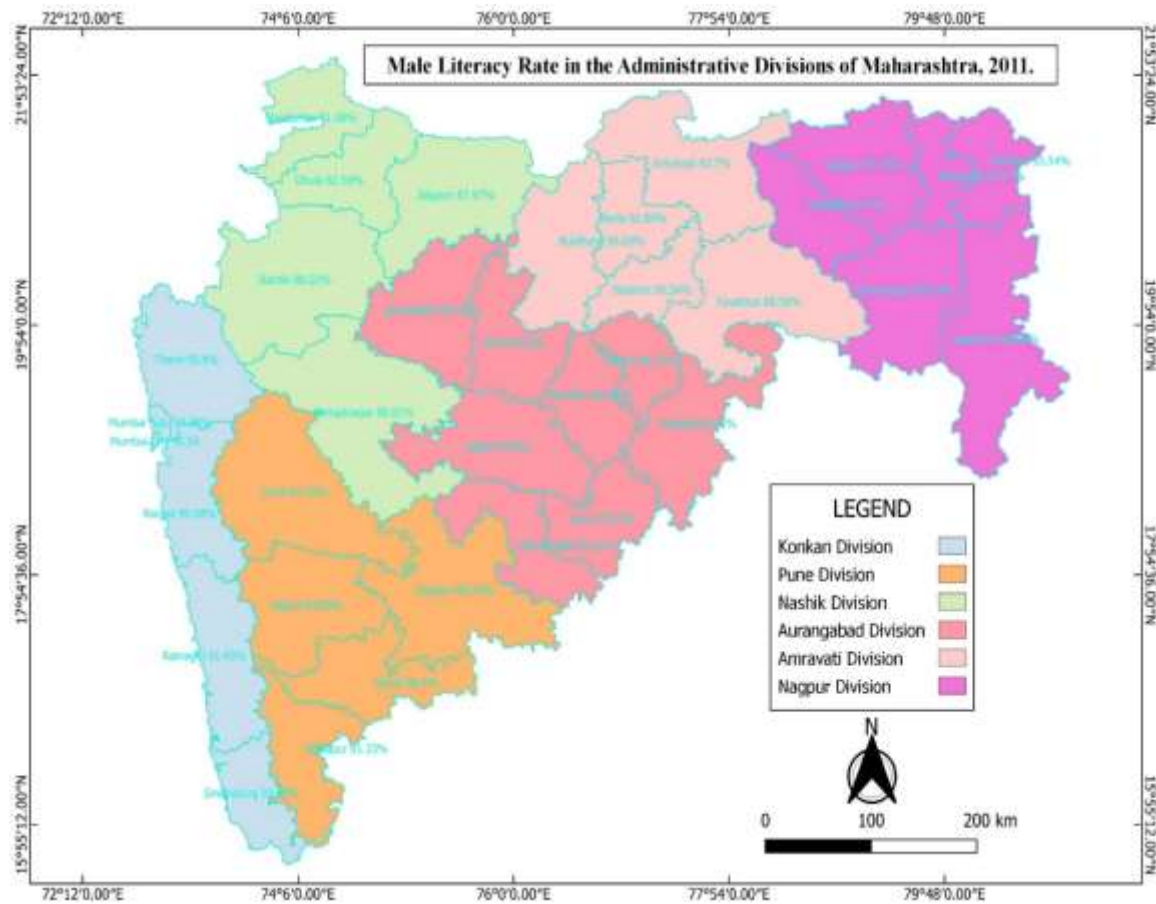
Table 3 indicates the literacy ratio in six divisions of Maharashtra i.e. Amravati, Aurangabad, Kokan, Nagpur, Nashik and Pune in the census year 2011. The table indicates that in the 2011 census, the average male literacy rate in the Konkan division was the highest (91.91%) among all the six divisions of Maharashtra, which was followed by Amravati (91.08%), Pune (90.57%), Nagpur (90.28%), Aurangabad (86.28%) and Nashik (83.87%) respectively.

Table 3: literacy rate in the administrative divisions of Maharashtra.

District	Male literacy rate	Female Literacy Rate	Average Literacy Rate	Male-female ratio
Konkan division				
Mumbai City	90.54	86.03	88.48	4.51
Mumbai Sub.	94.28	86.93	90.90	7.35
Raigad	90.68	76.79	83.89	13.89
Ratnagiri	91.43	74.55	82.43	16.88
Sindhudurg	93.68	79.73	86.54	13.95
Thane	90.90	80.78	86.18	10.12
Total	91.91	80.80	86.40	11.11
Amravati division				
Akola	92.89	81.91	87.55	10.98
Amravati	92.70	83.52	88.23	9.18
Buldhana	90.69	72.95	82.09	17.74
Washim	90.54	72.26	81.70	18.28
Yavatmal	88.58	72.41	80.70	16.17
Total	91.08	76.61	84.05	14.47
Aurangabad division				
Aurangabad	89.31	70.81	80.40	18.5
Beed	83.99	62.29	73.53	21.7
Hingoli	86.73	64.73	76.04	22
Jalna	85.25	61.28	73.61	23.97
Latur	87.42	70.02	79.03	17.4
Nanded	86.62	66.68	76.94	19.94
Osmanabad	85.31	66.67	76.33	18.64
Parbhani	85.66	64.27	75.22	21.39
Total	86.28	65.84	76.38	20.44
Nagpur division				
Bhandara	93.17	77.02	85.14	16.15
Chandrapur	88.73	73.65	81.35	15.08
Gadchiroli	80.21	60.66	70.55	19.55
Gondia	93.54	77.30	85.41	16.24
Nagpur	93.76	85.07	89.52	8.69
Wardha	92.27	81.89	87.22	10.38
Total	90.28	75.93	83.19	14.34
Nashik division				
Ahmednagar	88.81	71.15	80.22	17.66
Dhule	82.59	66.21	74.61	16.38
Jalgaon	87.97	70.92	79.73	17.05
Nandurbar	71.98	53.90	63.04	18.08
Nashik	88.03	73.43	80.96	14.6
Total	83.87	67.12	75.71	16.75
Pune division				
Pune	92.72	81.13	87.19	11.59
Kolhapur	91.33	74.18	82.90	17.15
Sangli	90.40	74.66	82.62	15.74
Satara	92.09	76.29	84.20	15.8
Solapur	86.35	68.55	77.72	17.8
Total	90.57	74.96	82.92	15.61
Maharashtra	89.82	75.48	82.91	14.34

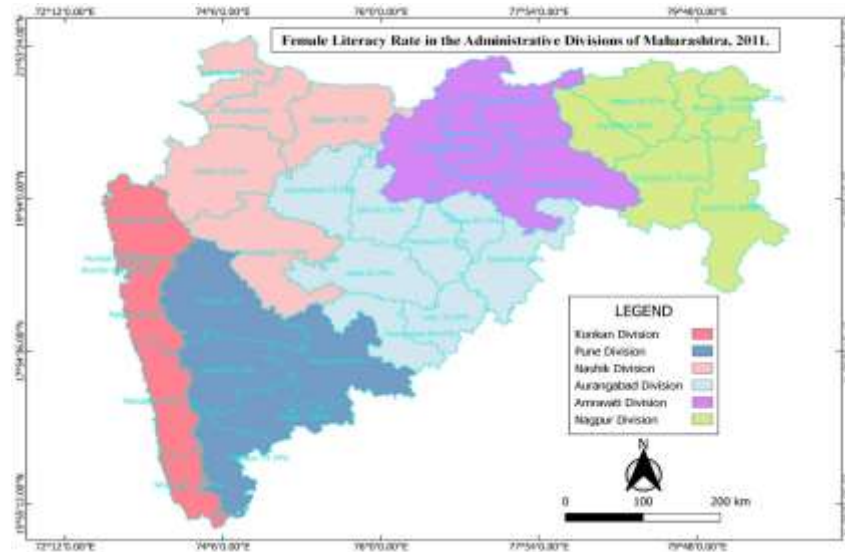
Note: Literacy rate, Census 2011 (7 years and above)

Map 2: Average Male Literacy in Administrative Divisions of Maharashtra.



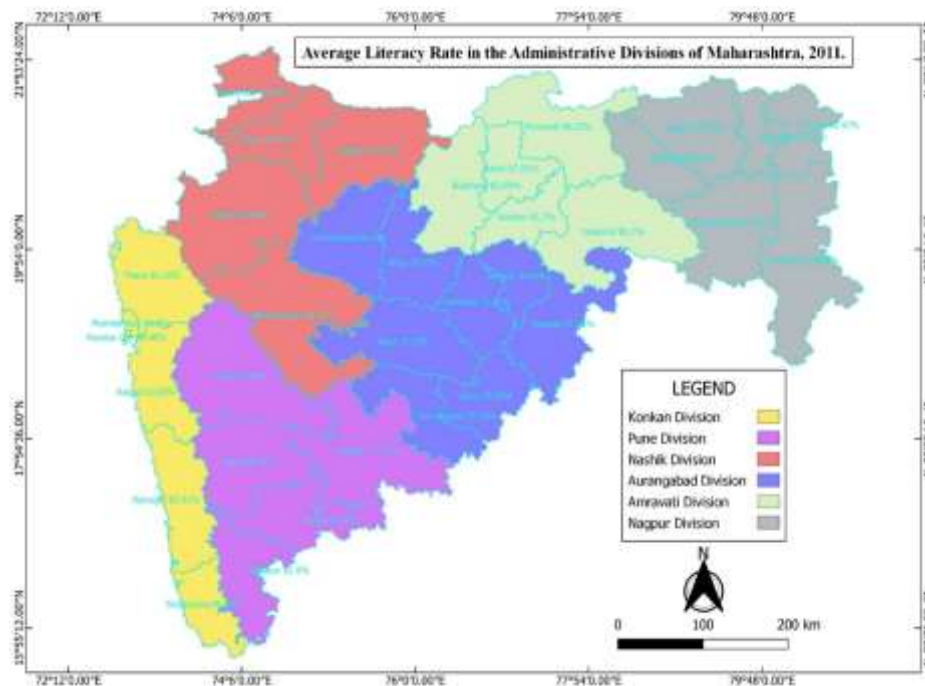
Source: Generated by the author.

Similarly, when considering the female literacy rate, it showed that in the census year 2011, the average female literacy rate for Maharashtra state as a total was 75.48 percent. The spatial disparity was observed among divisions of Maharashtra which showed that the average female literacy rate as per the 2011 census was highest in Konkan division (80.80%), and was followed by Amravati (76.61%), Nagpur (75.93%), Pune (74.96%), Nashik (67.12%) and Aurangabad (65.84%) respectively.

Map 3: Average female literacy in administrative divisions of Maharashtra.

Source: Generated by the author.

Identically, while considering the average literacy rate, it showed that in the census year 2011, the average literacy rate in Maharashtra state was 82.91 percent, which was higher than the corresponding national figure i.e. (74.04 percent). The division-wise data showed that the average literacy as per the 2011 census was again highest in the Konkan division (86.40%), which was followed by Amravati (84.05%), Nagpur (83.19%), Pune (82.92%), Aurangabad (76.38%) and Nashik (75.71%) respectively.

Map 4: Average literacy in administrative divisions of Maharashtra.

Source: generated by the author.

Similarly, when considering the gender gap between male-female in literacy rate as per the 2011 census, Maharashtra state as a whole exhibited a gender gap of 14.34 percent which was comparatively lower than the national average of 16.68 percent. The spatial disparity in gender gap between male-female in literacy rate was observed among different divisions and it was found that as per the 2011 census, the Konkan region had the lowest gender gap in literacy rate which was only 11.11 percent and was followed by Nagpur (14.34%), Amravati (14.47%), Pune (15.61%), Nashik (16.75%), and Aurangabad (20.44%) respectively.

Conclusion

The basic aim of the research work was to investigate the changing patterns of literacy rate along the Konkan division of Maharashtra. By employing the secondary data source, it has been observed that the literacy rate in the Konkan division is showing an increasing trend from 1991-2011. As per the 2011 census, the average literacy rate in the Konkan division was 86.40 percent, of which male literacy was 91.91 percent and female literacy was 80.80 percent. The data statistics exhibit a significant contrast in literacy rates between inter and intra-administrative divisions of Maharashtra state. The Konkan division is performing better in terms of literacy compared to other administrative divisions of the state. The results also reveal that coastal regions are performing better in terms of all variables of literacy (i.e. average literacy, male literacy and female literacy) compared to the other divisions of Maharashtra. This discrepancy may be due to the increased development of coastal regions through advances in trade, transportation and communication facilities.

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