

## Assessing English Learning Outcome: A Gender-Based Study in Ghazipur District

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### *Abstract*

*This study investigates the English learning outcomes of higher secondary students in Ghazipur district, Uttar Pradesh, focusing on the influence of gender and locality (rural vs. urban) on academic achievement. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, a sample of 103 students was assessed through a self-constructed English achievement test comprising 100 items. The study aimed to determine whether significant differences in English learning outcomes exist based on gender and residency. The findings reveal that while female students (mean = 56.3) slightly outperformed male students (mean = 53.1), the difference was not statistically significant ( $t = 1.29$ ). Similarly, rural students (mean = 57.2) performed better than their urban counterparts (mean = 54.1), though the difference was also not statistically significant ( $t = 1.32$ ). These results challenge common assumptions that urban students have an educational advantage over rural students. Although no significant disparities were found, the data suggest that localized educational factors, such as teaching quality and resource availability, could impact learning outcomes. The results highlight the importance of implementing more specific measures to tackle educational challenges in both rural and urban areas, with an emphasis on enhancing English language skills for all students.*

**Keywords:** *Learning Outcome, English Language, Higher Secondary Students, Gender, Rural-Urban disparity*

### **Introduction**

The Ghazipur district, situated in the eastern region of Uttar Pradesh, India, is recognized for its vibrant historical and cultural legacy. In recent years, several districts in the state including Ghazipur has faced significant challenges in the field of education, particularly in the

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academic performance of secondary school students. One of the most pressing concerns is the low achievement in English, which has been identified as a barrier to broader educational success and future opportunities for students in the region. Several reports and studies have highlighted the stark disparity in English language proficiency, with students in rural areas of Ghazipur performing below national and state averages (Government of Uttar Pradesh, 2022; ASER, 2021). These studies indicate that the underachievement is caused by various causes, including limited access to high-quality education, socioeconomic inequities, and inadequate teaching resources (NUEPA, 2020). Addressing this issue has become a priority for educators and policymakers, as English is increasingly seen as a key skill for economic mobility and global communication in the 21st century. National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021 report also indicates towards the low achievement of students where the national average is 43 and the state average is 34 which is well below. The available literature indicates lack of studies conducted in Ghazipur district which led the researcher conduct this study with the following research question:

Q: What are the learning outcomes in English among higher secondary students, and how do factors such as gender and residency (rural vs. urban) influence their English proficiency?

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **English Language Learning: Global and Local Context**

English has emerged as a global language of business, technology, and education, which makes English proficiency a critical skill for students in India (Crystal, 2003). In the Indian context, English is not only important for academic success but also for upward social and economic mobility (Graddol, 2010). However, gender disparities in English learning outcomes are prevalent across rural and urban areas, with rural girls being particularly disadvantaged (Ghosh, 2012). According to Banerjee and Duflo (2011). English learning outcomes are closely linked to the quality of instruction, access to educational materials, and student participation in classroom activities. In Ghazipur district, the lack of trained English teachers and limited access to learning materials such as textbooks and language labs can disproportionately affect girls, who may already face societal pressures that limit their engagement in English learning (Rao, 2014).

## **Gender and Education in India**

Numerous studies have highlighted the gender disparities in education across rural India, particularly in subjects like English, where access to resources, societal norms, and family expectations often differ significantly between boys and girls (Kingdon, 2002). In rural areas like Ghazipur, factors such as early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and cultural biases against female education create significant obstacles for girls in acquiring English language skills (Siddiqui, 2014).

The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) (2010) found that girls in rural India are often disadvantaged due to limited access to quality education, including the English language. Boys, on the other hand, tend to have more opportunities to attend private schools, which are often seen as providing superior English instruction (Desai et al., 2009). This disparity is further exacerbated by socio-economic factors, as families with limited financial resources may prioritize boys' education over girls' (Srivastava, 2011).

### **Factors Influencing English Proficiency**

Studies have shown that socio-economic status (SES), parental education, and access to private tutoring are significant determinants of English proficiency in India (Muralidharan & Sundararaman, 2011). For girls in rural areas like Ghazipur, these factors can either serve as barriers or facilitators, depending on the family's attitude toward education and the availability of external support systems such as scholarships and educational programs aimed at female students (Pandey, 2013).

Research by Jha and Kelleher (2006) found that the participation of girls in English language classes is often lower than that of boys, primarily due to socio-cultural factors that limit their active engagement in the classroom. Girls are often discouraged from asking questions or participating in discussions, which can negatively affect their English learning outcomes. Furthermore, a study by Kumar (2015) highlights that many rural girls are burdened with household chores, leaving them with less time to dedicate to their studies, including English language practice.

### **Addressing Gender Disparities in English Learning**

Efforts to bridge the gender gap in English learning outcomes have focused on a variety of interventions, including government initiatives to promote gender equity in education, the introduction of gender-sensitive curricula, and the provision of scholarships and mentoring

programs for girls (Sahni, 2017). UNICEF's (2012) report on girls' education in India recommends targeted strategies to increase female enrolment and retention in schools, particularly in rural areas where dropout rates are higher for girls. Furthermore, initiatives like the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have had a significant positive impact on girls' academic achievement and attendance at school, although challenges remain in ensuring that girls have access to quality education, particularly in subjects like English, where proficiency gaps remain significant (Sinha, 2018).

The body of research on English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) highlights several key issues related to educational equity and access. Studies consistently reveal that EMI programs, while globally prevalent, often exacerbate educational inequalities. Alhamami (2023) and Dearden (2014) discuss how EMI can lead to structural inequities and human rights violations by disadvantaging students with lower English proficiency. Evans and Morrison (2011) and Lo and Macaro (2012) point out the struggles students face, including diminished academic performance and reduced classroom engagement. Kirkpatrick (2011) and Sultana (2018) argue that EMI can undermine local languages and contribute to cultural and linguistic loss. Macaro et al. (2018) and Hamid et al. (2013) emphasize that EMI often benefits students from elite backgrounds, while marginalized students face increased challenges. Overall, the research calls for a re-evaluation of EMI policies to address these inequities and ensure fairer educational opportunities for all students.

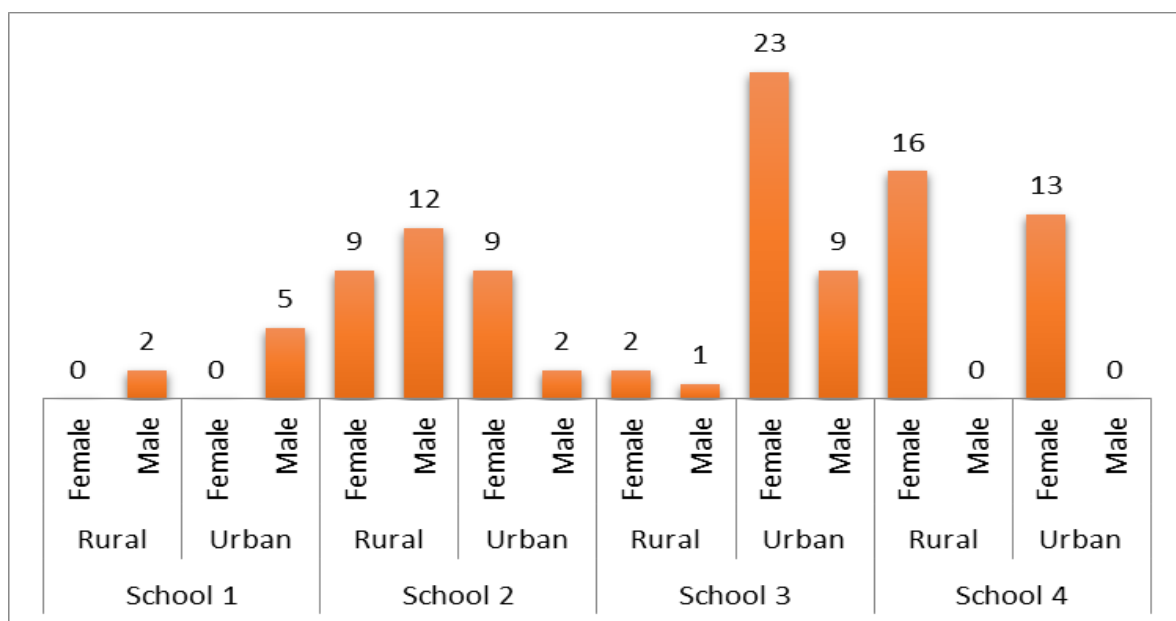
### **Research Procedure**

The academic performance of class 11th students in Ghazipur district is being studied across two blocks, with four schools selected from these blocks. Student were evaluated who enrolled in the academic session 2023-24 and the achievement test items were based on their syllabus supposed to be covered. The test consisted 100 items each question having one mark and no negative marking. The researcher aimed to find out the achievement in their English subject. The sample consists 103 students studying in Class 11 of Ghazipur district which has Rural and Urban as well as Male and Female students. The sample was selected through random sampling technique. The researcher used a self-constructed achievement test to assess the English Learning Outcome which had a reliability of 0.859 and was validated through expert validation. The test has three dimensions – Prose, Poetry and Grammar. The test was conducted offline in the month of July-August. The data was converted in digital form into Excel Sheet and also was analysed using MS Excel.

**Table 1: Participation of the Students**

Schools																Total Respondent
1		2				3				4						
Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		
F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
0	2	0	5	9	12	9	2	2	1	23	9	16	0	13	0	

**Figure1: Graphical representation of the sample**



**Findings of the study**

Overall Score	
N	103
Mean	55.4
Standard deviation	11.8

The mean of the overall result is found 55.4 and SD is 11.8.

**Table 2: t table based on Gender**

Group Descriptives					
Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-stat
Female	72	56.3	12.3	101	1.29
Male	31	53.1	10.1		

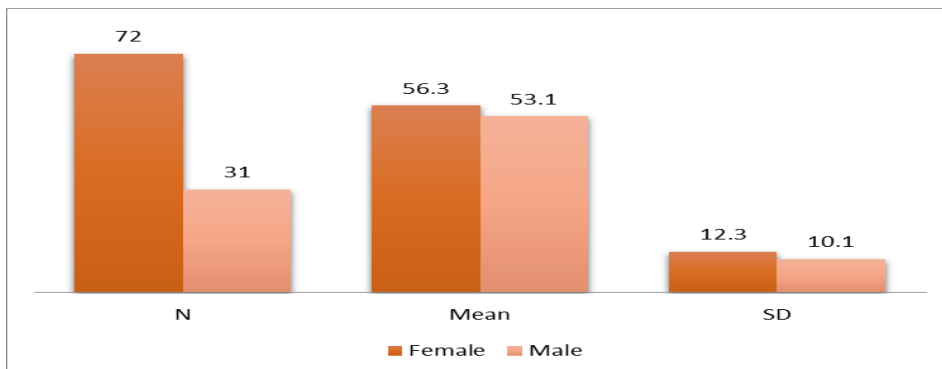
**H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of Male and Female students in English Learning Outcome.**

The above table presents group descriptive statistics for male and female participants. It compares the performance between the two groups. Where,

- **Group:** This column shows the two groups being compared, Female and Male.
- **N:** The sample size for each group. There are 72 females and 31 males.
- **Mean:** The mean score for each group shows that females have an average of 56.3, while males have an average of 53.1.
- **SD:** The standard deviation indicating the variability in scores within each group. The female group has a standard deviation of 12.3, and the male group has a standard deviation of 10.1.
- **df:** The degrees of freedom for the t-test, calculated as 101.
- **t-stat:** The t-statistic from the independent samples t-test is 1.29 which is less than the table value of t at df 102, 1.97. It suggests that the two means are not statistically significant at typical alpha levels. Which means we fail to reject the H<sub>0</sub>1

This data indicates that while females have a slightly higher average score than males, the difference is not significant based on the given t-statistic.

**Figure 2: Graphical Representation of Mean and SD of Male and Female students**



**H<sub>0</sub>2: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of Rural and Urban students in English Learning Outcome.**

**Table 3: t table based on Residency**

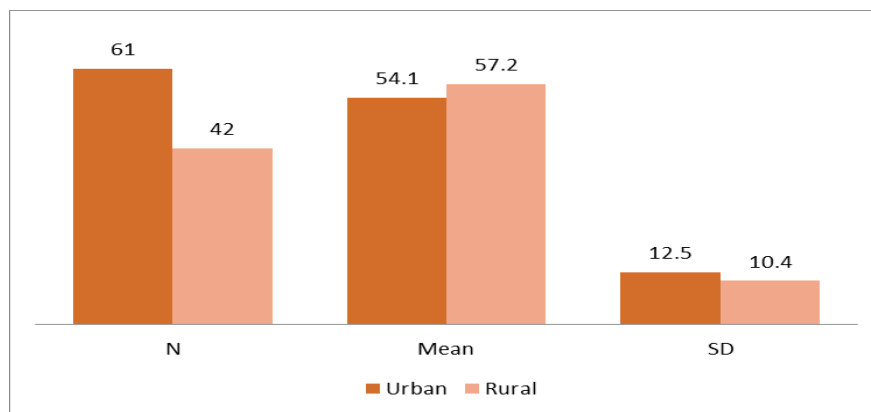
Group Descriptives						
	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-stat
Score	Urban	61	54.1	12.5	101	1.32
	Rural	42	57.2	10.4		

The above table presents group descriptive statistics for rural and urban participants. It compares the performance between the two groups, where,

- **Group:** The table compares two groups—Rural and Urban participants.
- **N (Sample Size):** For the Rural group, there are 61 participants, while the Rural group has 42 participants.
- **Mean (Average Score):** Rural students have an average score of 54.1, whereas Urban students have an average score of 57.2.

- **SD (Standard Deviation):** The standard deviation measures the variability in scores within each group. For Rural students, it's 12.5, and for Urban Students, it's 10.4.
- **Df (Degrees of Freedom):** The degrees of freedom, calculated as 101, are essential for statistical tests like t-tests.
- **t-stat (T-Statistic):** The t-statistic resulting from an independent samples t-test is 1.32. However, this value is less than the critical t-value (1.97) at the given degrees of freedom (102). As a result, we don't find statistically significant evidence to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) Therefore we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

**Figure 3: Graphical Representation of Mean and SD of Rural and Urban students**



## Results and Discussion

The study aimed to investigate the academic outcomes of higher secondary students in English, focusing on the effects of gender and locality (rural vs. urban) in Ghazipur district. The findings were based on the analysis of test scores from 103 students, utilizing a self-constructed achievement test with high reliability and validated content.

**Gender Comparison:** The results indicated that female students had a higher mean score (56.3) compared to male students (53.1). However, the difference in performance was not statistically significant ( $t$ -statistic = 1.29), leading to the failure to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) that there is no significant difference in English learning outcomes based on gender. This suggests that while female students performed better on average, the difference is not enough to draw definitive conclusions about gender disparities in academic performance.

**Residency Comparison:**When comparing rural and urban students, rural students scored a mean of 57.2, while urban students had a mean score of 54.1. The t-statistic for this comparison was 1.32, also not significant enough to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). This outcome implies that, contrary to expectations, rural students performed better than their urban counterparts in English learning outcomes, highlighting a possible variance in educational quality or support systems between the two localities.

## Discussion

This statistical data provides insights into the performance of students based on geography (rural vs. urban) and gender (male vs. female) in relation to the mean score and standard deviation. A total of 45.63% of students scored higher than the mean score, and among them, 16 students performed significantly better, scoring above the Mean + 1 Standard Deviation (SD). Of these 16 students, 43.75% (7 students) were from rural areas, and 56.25% (9 students) were from urban areas, indicating a slight urban dominance in high performance. In terms of gender, there is a stark difference, with only one male student (6.25%) scoring above Mean + 1 SD, while 93.75% (15 students) were female, highlighting a strong female presence among the top performers. Overall, the data shows a balanced representation of students from rural and urban areas, with a slight urban advantage, but the most notable aspect is the significant gender gap, with females outperforming males considerably in the above-average group.

The data on students scoring below the average sheds light on their performance in relation to geographical location (rural vs. urban) and gender (male vs. female) concerning the mean score and standard deviation. A total of 54.36% of students scored below the mean, and among them, 16 students performed particularly poorly, scoring below the Mean - 1 Standard Deviation (SD), indicating a significant struggle compared to the average. Of these 16 students, 31.25% were from rural areas, while a larger proportion, 68.75%, were from urban areas, suggesting more urban students underperformed. In terms of gender, 37.5% of the below-average group were male, while 62.5% were female, showing that more females were among the lower performers, although the gender difference was less stark than in the above-average group. This data reveals that while urban students are more represented in the underperforming category, the gender distribution is relatively balanced, with a majority of underperformers being female, contrasting with the dominant female presence among the top performers.

## **Possible reasons for the learning outcome**

While the data does not present any significant statistical difference with respect to gender and residency, there are multiple factors which affect the low achievement of students in English learning. The available data in public domain also supports the findings of the study (NAS 2021) where most of the students are low achievers in English Learning Outcomes. Below are some possible reasons which play major role in their English Learning Outcomes:

### **Gender Dynamics**

The lack of significant difference in performance between male and female students suggests that the educational environment is more equitable. This is attributed to increased efforts to promote gender equality in education through various initiatives, as mentioned in the literature review. However, the slight edge for females indicates ongoing efforts are necessary to address the socio-cultural factors that still influence learning outcomes.

### **Impact of Locality**

The unexpected result of rural students outperforming urban students challenges prevailing assumptions about educational quality disparities based on locality. This is influenced by various factors, such as more individualized attention in smaller rural schools or specific teaching methods that are more effective. The findings suggest a need for further research to explore these dynamics and understand the contributing factors.

This study provides insights into the learning outcomes of higher secondary students in English concerning gender and locality, the results indicate that more nuanced factors are at play. Continued efforts to improve educational quality and accessibility, particularly in rural areas, are essential for ensuring equitable outcomes for all students.

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