

Growth of Higher Education Institutions in India: A State Level Analysis

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ABSTRACT- Education is an essential component of the social sector and serves as a key driver of long-term economic growth and human capital formation. Over the past decade, India's higher education sector has witnessed massive expansion, resulting in a significant increase in the number of universities and colleges across various States and Union Territories (UTs). However, alongside this quantitative growth, significant spatial disparities have also been observed in the distribution of higher education institutions, raising concerns regarding regional imbalances and equitable access. The present study examines the growth and distribution of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across various States and Union Territories of India within the context of the 2010-11 to 2019-20 period. Data for this study were collected from the 'All India Survey on Higher Education' (AISHE), and the various factors influencing this growth of HEIs were investigated through the application of panel regression analysis. To understand the impact on the dynamics of growth, variables such as per capita income, government expenditure on education, population, and demographic characteristics are taken into consideration. The empirical results reveal significant inter-state variation and uneven institutional density, indicating that economically strong states experience rapid expansion in higher education infrastructure. By comparing States and Union Territories over time, the study highlights the diverse growth trajectories and structural constraints that shape regional development patterns. These insights contribute to the ongoing policy discussions aimed at reducing regional disparities and fostering balanced, inclusive, and sustainable growth within India's higher education sector.

KEYWORDS- Higher Education, Colleges and Universities, Regional Disparities, Indian States, Panel Regression

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important components of the social sector and a significant determinant of economic growth. Over the past few decades, India's higher education sector has achieved significant growth, transforming it into one of the world's largest and most dynamic education systems. This growth is a response to various socio-economic, policy-related, and technological

factors that have collectively accelerated the demand for quality education and the expansion of educational institutions aimed at meeting that demand. Understanding the growth path and the factors influencing this sector is vital for policymakers, educators, and students.

There are several key factors behind the expansion of higher education institutions in India. In the 1990s, economic liberalization unleashed market forces that encouraged private investment in the education sector, resulting in a significant increase in the number of private colleges and universities. Concurrently, government initiatives aimed at expanding educational opportunities such as the establishment of new Central Universities, Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) have significantly strengthened the public education sector. India's young population, with a median age of approximately 24 years, has created a vast reservoir of prospective students aspiring to pursue higher education. The combined impact of the demographic dividend and a growing aspiration for enhanced professional prospects has led to an unprecedented surge in enrollment numbers. Policy reforms have further accelerated this growth. The Government of India set the objective of reforming and revitalizing the higher education sector through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The NEP proposed initiatives such as the establishment of multidisciplinary institutions, enhanced autonomy for universities, and an emphasis on research and innovation. Initiatives such as the Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) aim to enhance the quality and equity of higher education across the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the expansion of online education in India. To maintain educational continuity, many universities and colleges have invested in digital infrastructure and online learning platforms. This growth of online education has created opportunities for students to pursue higher education from remote locations. This shift has made higher education more accessible, overcoming geographical barriers and providing opportunities for millions of students.

There has been an unprecedented expansion in Higher Education in India and Universities and Colleges had increased significantly in number. But there are wide inequalities between different states in India in Higher Education in terms of number of Universities and

Colleges. So, the present study attempted to understand the Growth of Higher Education Institutions in India i.e. Colleges and Universities across different States and Union Territories.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The development of higher education has been widely studied in relation to institutional growth, public expenditure, enrolment patterns, and economic outcomes. For instance, Borthakur, Nath and Chakraborty [1] examined the growth of higher education in India since independence, particularly during the post-reform period using regression models based on AISHE and UGC data. Their study highlighted significant expansion in the sector though the growth remains insufficient to meet rising demand. Similarly, Sahoo and Chakraborty [2] studied the pattern of public funding for post-secondary education in selected Indian states by using funds spent as a percentage of Gross State Domestic Product. There are many studies have the nexus between public funding related to educational services and the country's economic development efforts. Ojha, Ghosh and Pradhan [3] explored how government investments in secondary and higher education play a key role in driving economic development that is inclusive to all members of society within India. Mukherjee and Sarkar [4] found a strong positive relationship between education expenditure and per capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) in Indian metro states. Bhattacharyya [5] examined the short-run and long-run relationship between education expenditure and economic growth using a panel vector error correction model, while Ifa and Guetat [6] applied the ARDL approach to analyse the impact of education expenditure on GDP per capita in Morocco, Tunisia and Kenya. Mohanty and Bhanumurthy [7] assessed the efficiency of public expenditure on health and education across Indian states using the Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) methodology. Another strand of literature focuses on enrolment and access to higher education. Batool and Liu [8] investigated the relationship between socioeconomic indicators and student enrolment in higher education institutions in Pakistan. Whatley and Castiello-Gutiérrez [9] analysed international student enrolment decisions in higher education institutions in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sikander et al. [10] examined Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and funding patterns of higher education institutions in India in relation to the targets set under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Similarly, Dubey [11] found that public expenditure on education positively influences access to higher education through increased enrolment. A number of studies have also examined the expansion and institutional development of higher education systems globally. Ansari and Khan [12] analysed trends and patterns of public expenditure on education in India including the allocation between plan and non-plan expenditure. Sankar and Koner [13] studied the evolution of public expenditure on higher education and its contribution to educational development in India. Buckner [14] examined the global expansion of private higher education institutions between 1960 and 2006. Zapp [15] analysed the institutionalisation and expansion of higher education systems and the growth of science across several countries from 1945 to 2015.

Özoğlu, Gür and Gümüş [16] discussed the challenges faced by newly established public universities in Turkey including funding constraints and student recruitment issues. Vieira and Lepori [17] examined the growth of higher education institutions based on academic staff and institutional characteristics. Othman, Othman and Ismail [18] studied the impact of globalization on entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions, while Chae and Hong [19] highlighted the role of private universities in expanding access to higher education in South Korea.

Although existing literature has extensively examined issues related to education expenditure, enrolment, institutional expansion and economic growth, limited attention has been given to analysing the growth and distribution of higher education institutions across different States and Union Territories of India, particularly with regard to the expansion of colleges and universities separately. This indicates a clear research gap that the present study attempts to address.

The main objectives of the present study are twofold: firstly, it examines the growth of higher education institutions in various states and union territories of India, and finally, it tries to find out the factors that affect the growth of higher education institutions.

III. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Data sources- In this study, secondary data sources are specifically All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) from the Ministry of Education (MHRD Reports), and data on government expenditure on education and 'Net State Domestic Product' have been utilized. This information has been collected from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), MoSPI and State Government Budget. And for this study time period considered is 2010-11 to 2020-21. The variables considered are number of Private Unaided college, number of Private Aided college, number of Government college and number of Total College and number of total universities. Under total number of higher education institution, there are both total college and total university. For this study, 27 States and 5 Union Territories (UTs) have been selected. The 27 States are: Andhra Pradesh (AP), Arunachal Pradesh (AR), Assam (AS), Bihar (BR), Chhattisgarh (CG), Goa (GA), Gujarat (GJ), Haryana (HR), Himachal Pradesh (HP), Jharkhand (JH), Karnataka (KA), Kerala (KL), Madhya Pradesh (MP), Maharashtra (MH), Mizoram (MZ), Nagaland (NL), Odisha (OR), Punjab (PB), Rajasthan (RJ), Sikkim (SK), Tamil Nadu (TN), Tripura (TR), Uttar Pradesh (UP), Uttarakhand (UK), and West Bengal (WB). The 5 UTs considered are: Andaman and Nicobar Islands (AN), Chandigarh (CH), Delhi (DL), Jammu and Kashmir (JK), and Puducherry (PY).

IV. METHODOLOGY

Using year to year growth rates (YOY), the growth rates of various variables have been calculated for the period 2010-11 to 2020-21. For the purpose of comparison between States and Union Territories, the Annual Average Growth Rate (AAGR) has been calculated from this YOY.

$$\text{YOY in a period } t = A/B \text{ ----- (1)}$$

Where, A = difference in the magnitude of the variable in period t and t-1 and B = Magnitude of the variable in period t-1.

$$AAGR = \text{Average of YOYs} \text{ ----- (2)}$$

To find out the factors affecting the growth of higher education institutions, Panel Least squares model is used where dependent variable is “Size of total HEI” and independent variables are ‘Net State Domestic Products (NSDP)’, ‘Government Education Expenditure (GEE)’, ‘Per Lakh Population (PLP) in age group 18-23 years’ and ‘Square term of NSDP, GEE & PLP’ and ‘cross product term of NSDP and GEE’.

GEE for the ith state can be measured as the ratio of government education expenditure for the ith state to total government expenditure for the ith state.

$$HEI = f(\text{NSDP}, \text{GEE}, \text{PLP}, \text{NSDP}^2, \text{GEE}^2, \text{PLP}^2, \text{NSDP} * \text{GEE})$$

The above explanatory variables taken can be justified as below:

Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) influences the growth of higher education through its impact on funding, demand for education, research opportunities, industry partnerships, student enrollment, and economic conditions. A growing economy typically facilitates the expansion of higher education institutions, the enhancement of

educational quality, and contributions to regional development [4] [11]. Government Education Expenditure (GEE) is crucial for the growth of higher education. It funds infrastructure, supports faculty and research, widens student access and builds industry links that drive institutional growth [13]. Per lakh Population (PLP) in the 18-23 age group is an important demographic factor for higher education demand. It affects enrollment, program diversification, resource allocation, infrastructure development and institutional growth. Organizations must consider this population when planning for expansion and strategic development[8][20].

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

For finding out the Growth of Higher Education Institutions in different States and Union Territories of India, the variables are Private Aided College, Private Unaided College, Government College, Total number of Colleges, Total number of Universities and Total Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

Growth of the variables are calculated using Year to year growth rate (YOY) for the period 2010-11 to 2020- 21 and AAGR is used to compare growth rate of higher education institution between the States and Union Territories.

Table 1: AAGR of different types of HEIs in States and Union Territories

States & UT	Private Unaided College	Private Aided College	Government College	Total College	Total University	Total HEI
AP	-0.011	-0.030	0.000	-0.012	0.015	-0.012
AR	0.203	0.370	0.152	0.175	0.171	0.164
AS	0.153	0.123	0.140	0.139	0.130	0.138
BR	0.312	0.169	0.018	0.072	0.068	0.071
CG	0.094	0.073	0.073	0.081	0.080	0.081
GA	0.134	0.065	0.051	0.069	0.075	0.067
GJ	0.085	0.026	-0.017	0.038	0.088	0.039
HR	0.178	0.138	0.177	0.171	0.106	0.165
HP	0.052	0.012	0.043	0.041	0.051	0.042
JH	0.557	0.220	0.273	0.318	0.108	0.270
KA	0.046	0.026	0.018	0.038	0.054	0.038
KL	0.136	0.058	0.088	0.099	0.038	0.097
MP	0.261	0.409	0.298	0.284	0.104	0.271
MH	0.201	0.124	0.039	0.140	0.050	0.138
MN	0.690	0.198	0.255	0.288	0.133	0.259
ML	0.118	0.058	0.164	0.106	0.026	0.087
MZ	0.283	-0.250	0.018	0.034	0.000	0.032
NL	0.029	0.071	0.000	0.026	0.025	0.026
OR	0.140	0.155	0.116	0.132	0.073	0.130
PB	0.156	0.354	0.177	0.176	0.072	0.171
RJ	0.185	0.238	0.163	0.182	0.082	0.177
SK	0.010	-0.333	0.125	0.082	0.031	0.063
TN	0.106	0.324	0.403	0.136	0.000	0.129

TR	0.047	0.200	0.038	0.043	0.072	0.044
UP	0.321	0.165	0.161	0.264	0.042	0.256
UK	0.121	0.187	0.069	0.098	0.076	0.096
WB	0.205	0.162	0.180	0.186	0.074	0.178
AN	--	--	0.067	0.067	NA	0.067
CH	0.200	0.133	0.064	0.086	0.000	0.072
DL	0.009	0.007	0.038	0.023	0.008	0.021
JK	0.148	0.233	0.109	0.126	0.043	0.120
PY	-0.008	-0.033	0.019	-0.001	0.000	-0.001

The growth rates are fluctuating and also shows negative values for some of the states. Thus, interstate disparity is evident from the result of the Table 1. The following Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4 shows the

interstate disparity results of different colleges like Private Aided College, Private Unaided College, Government College and Total number of colleges more clearly as below:

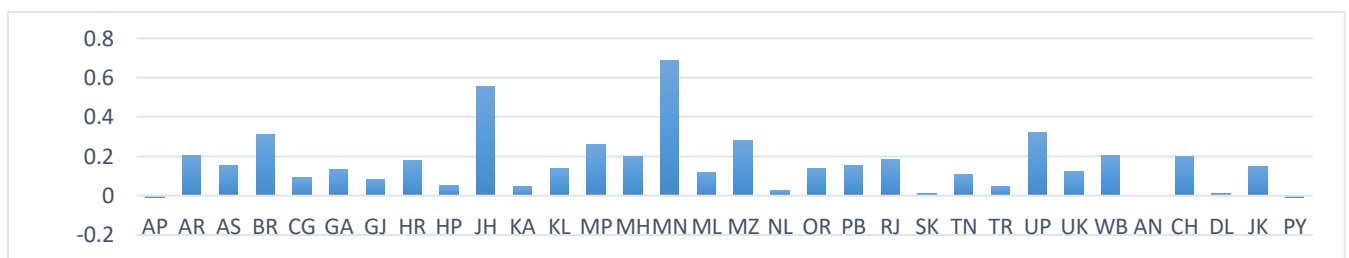


Figure 1: AAGR of Private Unaided College for different States and Union Territories

In Figure 1, Manipur state has the highest AAGR for Private Unaided College which is 0.690 and then Jharkhand (JH) State which is 0.557. Only Andhra Pradesh (AP) state has negative AAGR i.e. (-) 0.011. Among

Union territories, Chandigarh is highest in AAGR of Private Unaided College which is 0.126 and then Jammu & Kashmir (JK). For Puducherry (PY), it is negative.

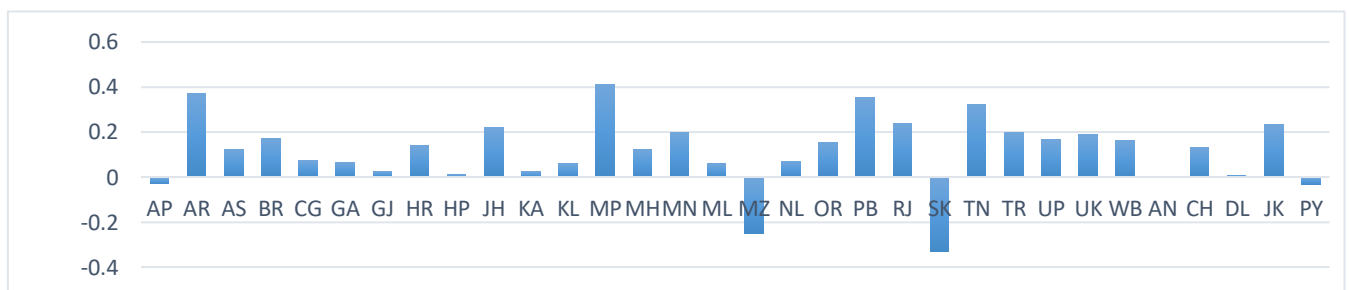


Figure 2: AAGR of Private Aided College for different States and Union Territories

Above Figure 2 shows that Madhya Pradesh state has the highest AAGR w.r.t. Private Aided College which is 0.409 and then Arunachal Pradesh which is 0.370. Sikkim, Mizoram and Andhra Pradesh states have negative AAGR

of Private Aided College. Among Union territories, Jammu & Kashmir has highest AAGR of Private Aided College which is 0.223 and then Chandigarh. Only Puducherry's AAGR is negative.

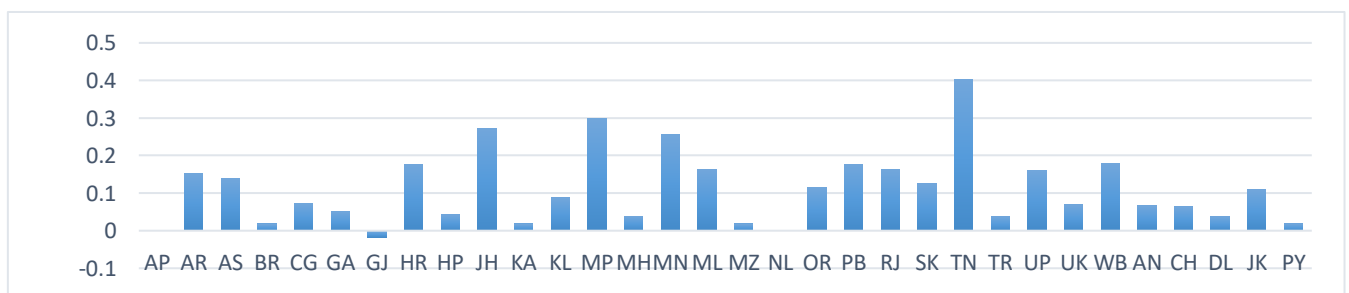


Figure 3: AAGR of Government College for different States and Union Territories

In the above Figure 3, Tamil Nadu state has the highest AAGR for the Government College which is 0.403 and then Madhya Pradesh which is 0.298. Only Gujarat state has negative AAGR i.e. (-) 0.017. Jammu & Kashmir

shows highest AAGR of Government College among Union territories which is 0.109 and then is Andaman & Nicobar Island.

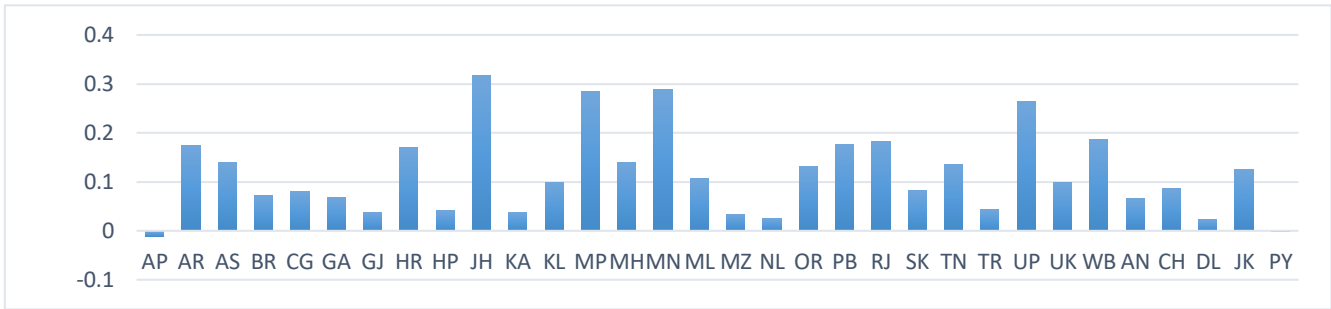


Figure 4: AAGR of Total Colleges for different States and Union Territories

The above Figure 4 shows that Jharkhand state has the highest AAGR which is 0.318 and then Manipur which is 0.288. Only Arunachal Pradesh states have negative AAGR. i.e. (-) 0.012. In India, Jammu & Kashmir has highest AAGR among Union territories which is 0.126 and

followed by Chandigarh. Puducherry has negative AAGR. The results of different colleges like Private Aided College, Private Unaided College, Government College and Total number of colleges can be summarized as below:

Table 2: Types of Colleges with maximum growth in States & Union Territories

States & Union Territories	Maximum Growth in Colleges
Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Andaman & Nicobar, Delhi and Puducherry	Government
Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Jammu & Kashmir	Private Aided
Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Tripura, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Chandigarh	Private Unaided

Table 2 shows that Private Unaided colleges in 16 States have maximum growth, Private Aided colleges in 7 States have shown maximum growth and Government colleges in 4 States have maximum growth. Among 5 Union

Territories, Govt. colleges in 3 Union Territories have maximum growth; private Aided college in one Union Territories have maximum growth and Private Unaided college in one Union Territories displayed highest growth.

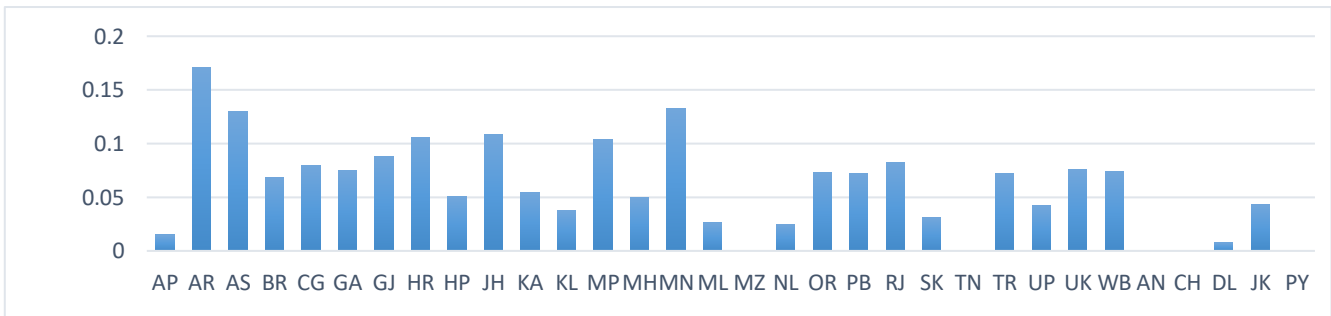


Figure 5: AAGR of Total University for different States and Union Territories

Figure 5 shows AAGR of Total University among States and Union Territories. Here Arunachal Pradesh is highest university growing state whose average growth rate is

0.171 and then Manipur whose annual average growth rate is 0.133. Among Union Territories, Jammu and Kashmir shows highest AAGR and then followed by Delhi.

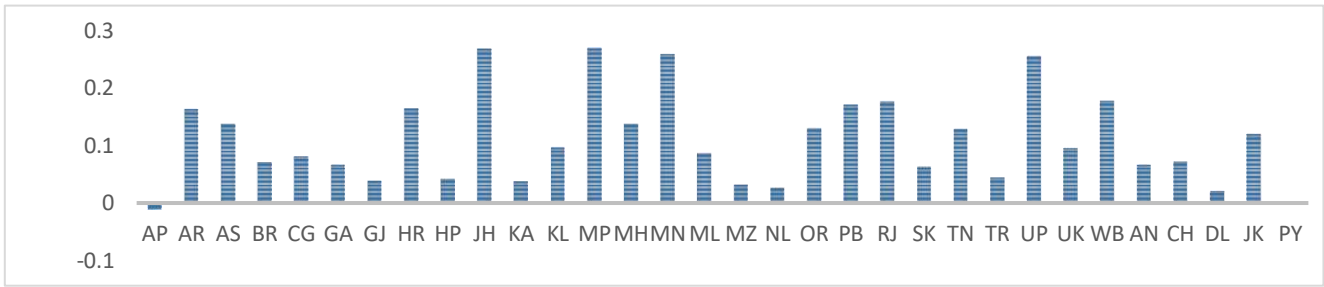


Figure 6: Average Annual Growth Rate of HEI for different States and Union Territories

In the above Figure 6, AAGR of HEI of Madhya Pradesh is highest among States and then Jharkhand and then followed by Manipur States. But AAGR of Andhra Pradesh is negative which is (-) 0.012. Among Union Territories, for AAGR of HEI, Chandigarh is highest and then Andaman & Nicobar Island and for Puducherry, AAGR is negative.

To find out the factors affecting the growth of higher education institutions, the following Panel Least squares model is used:

$$LN(HEI)_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 LN(NSDP)_{it} + \beta_2 LN(GEE)_{it} + \beta_3 (PLP)_{it} + \beta_4 (LN(NSDP)^2)_{it} + \beta_5 (LN(GEE)^2)_{it} + \beta_6 (LN(PLP)^2)_{it} + \beta_7 (LN(NSDP) * LN(GEE))_{it} + e_{it}$$

Where, HEI: Higher Education Institution, NSDP: Net State Domestic Product at Constant Price, GEE: Government Education Expenditure, PLP: Per Lakh Population (18-23 years), α : Constant term, $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_7$: Coefficient of independent variable, e_{it} : Error term.

The result of Panel Regression is found in Table 3. For GEE, the result is statistically significant at 5% level and the relationship between HEI and GEE is positive: it implying that one percent increase in GEE contributes

1.3050% increases in Higher education institution. The relationship between HEI and square of GEE is negative. So, if GEE increases then HEI also increases at first but after some time, with GEE increase HEI will decrease. So, there exists an inverted U-shaped relationship between HEI and GEE. PLP is statistically significant at 1% level and its relationship between dependent variable is positive. So, if one percent increases in Per Lakh Population (18-23 years) contributes to 1.3050% increase in Higher education institution. The relationship between HEI and square of PLP is negative. So, if PLP is increases then HEI also increases at first but after some time with rise in PLP, HEI may decrease. So, there exists an inverted U-shaped relationship between HEI and PLP just like GEE. The joint influence of NSDP and GEE have a positive impact on HEI. So, if NSDP increases then GEE also increases and thus leading to HEI increase. A positive marginal effect for the variables, GEE and PLP are found. This means that when we increase GEE and PLP by one unit, while keeping all other variables constant, the predicted value of Higher Education Institution (HEI) also increases.

Table 3: Results of Panel Regression

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.	Marginal Effect
C	-14.7029	2.640266	-5.568719	0.0000	-
LN_NSDP	0.007247	0.457825	0.015828	0.9874	-
LN_GEE	1.305046	0.584823	2.231522	0.0264**	0.3418
LN_PLP	1.736285	0.430202	4.035975	0.0001***	0.4551
(LN_NSDP) ²	-0.064339	0.032391	-1.98633	0.0479**	-
(LN_GEE) ²	-0.08588	0.040121	-2.140534	0.0331**	-
(LN_PLP) ²	-0.203299	0.071224	-2.854352	0.0046***	-
LN_NSDP * LN_GEE	0.144976	0.06525	2.221855	0.0270**	-
Adjusted R-squared	0.9522				
Log likelihood	-149.8318				
F-statistic	909.7634				
Prob(F-statistic)	0.0000				

VI. CONCLUSION

In India, higher education has expanded significantly, with universities and colleges increasing markedly in number. Using data for 27 States and 5 Union Territories from the

All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) during the period 2010-11 to 2020-21 and employing panel regression analysis, the research explores the growth of higher education institutions in different states and union

territories of India and the key factors influencing this expansion of Higher Education institutions.

Private Unaided colleges in 16 States have maximum growth. Private Aided colleges in 7 States have seen maximum growth and Govt. colleges in 4 States have seen maximum growth. Among 5 Union Territories, Govt. colleges in 3 UT have maximum growth. Private Aided College in one UT has maximum growth and Private Unaided College in one UT is highest growth.

There exists an inverted U-shaped relationship between HEI and PLP just like HEI and GEE. The joint influence of NSDP and GEE have a positive impact on HEI. So, if NSDP increases then GEE also increases and thus leading to HEI increase. A positive marginal effect for the variables, GEE and PLP on HEI are found.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared that they have no conflict of interest.

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