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Tracking the Missing Middle: Class 9–12 Enrollment Transitions in CM Rise and Other Government Schools, Madhya Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Comparative research on Madhya Pradesh's CM Rise Schools initiative has, to date, examined student outcomes primarily through Class 10 board examination results, without analysing how enrollment itself moves across class levels within the secondary and higher-secondary stage. This paper uses previously unreported class-wise (Class 9 to Class 12) enrollment data from the same 20-school sample (10 CM Rise Schools and 10 other Government Schools) in the Ujjain division of Madhya Pradesh to examine three enrollment transition points for the 2023-24 academic year: Class 9 to Class 10, Class 10 to Class 11, and Class 11 to Class 12. The analysis finds that other Government Schools retain a slightly higher proportion of students from Class 9 to Class 10 (63.9% against 60.5% for CM Rise Schools) and a substantially higher proportion from Class 11 to Class 12 (98.7% against 85.2%), while CM Rise Schools show a larger inward increase in enrollment from Class 10 to Class 11 (150.7% against 145.7%), consistent with students transferring in for higher secondary study. These findings complicate a straightforward reading of CM Rise Schools as uniformly superior, showing that the initiative's advantage in attracting students at the higher-secondary transition coexists with a comparatively weaker record of retaining students already enrolled at the secondary stage.

Keywords: Enrollment transition; Student retention; Class-wise analysis; CM Rise Schools; Madhya Pradesh; Secondary education; School choice

1. INTRODUCTION

Comparative evaluation of school reform initiatives typically relies on examination outcomes, such as board examination pass rates, as the primary measure of school effectiveness. Examination outcomes, however, describe only the students who remain enrolled long enough to sit the examination; they do not describe how many students were enrolled earlier in the same school and did not progress to that point. Enrollment data disaggregated by class level offers a complementary lens, one capable of showing whether a school's apparent academic strength coexists with, or is undermined by, weaker retention of the student cohort over time.

This paper draws on class-wise (Class 9, 10, 11, and 12) enrollment data collected as part of the same broader comparative study of 20 schools (10 CM Rise Schools and 10 other Government Schools) in the Ujjain division of Madhya Pradesh used in prior published work on the CM Rise initiative [14, 15, 16]. These class-wise data have not previously been analysed or reported: the earlier work confined its academic-outcome analysis to Class 10 board examination results and its enrollment analysis to year-on-year totals rather than class-wise transition ratios.

1.1 Rationale

The structure of secondary and higher-secondary schooling in Madhya Pradesh, as elsewhere in India, involves several points at which students may leave a school, repeat a class, or transfer to a different institution, most notably around the Class 10 board examination and around the transition into the Class 11 stream choice [1, 2]. A school's class-wise enrollment pattern across these transition points offers evidence, independent of examination results, about whether the school is retaining its own students or drawing in students from elsewhere, information directly relevant to interpreting what a comparative academic-achievement finding actually reflects.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This paper pursues three objectives: (1) to compute Class 9-to-10, Class 10-to-11, and Class 11-to-12 enrollment transition ratios for CM Rise Schools and other Government Schools using 2023-24 class-wise enrollment data; (2) to compare these ratios between the two categories of school; and (3) to identify individual schools whose transition ratios diverge most sharply from their category's average.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Right to Education Act and subsequent policy attention in India have historically emphasised enrollment and access at the elementary level, with comparatively less systematic monitoring of enrollment continuity through the secondary and higher-secondary stages, where transitions are structurally more complex due to board examinations, stream choice, and inter-school mobility [3, 4]. ASER's [5] annual monitoring has repeatedly found that rising enrollment at the elementary level in India has not been matched by equivalent attention to what happens to the same students as they progress through secondary school, a gap this paper's class-wise transition analysis addresses at the level of an individual initiative.

Willms' [6] work on student engagement and school belonging frames continued enrollment itself as a meaningful indicator of school engagement, arguing that a student's decision to remain enrolled, transfer, or leave reflects the school's holding power independently of that student's eventual examination performance. Muralidharan's [7] review of school reform evidence in developing countries similarly notes that reform initiatives evaluated only on the examination outcomes of students who remain enrolled can overstate their effectiveness if the same initiatives are also associated with higher attrition of weaker-performing students before the examination point, a possibility this paper's transition-ratio analysis is designed to detect. National Education Policy 2020 [8] explicitly identifies smooth transition across stages of schooling, including the secondary-to-higher-secondary transition, as a priority area for monitoring, consistent with the approach adopted in this paper.

Within the specific context of the CM Rise initiative, prior work has documented that the programme consolidates schools within a defined radius into fewer, larger, better-equipped institutions [9, 16], a structural feature that would be expected, on straightforward grounds, to increase inward transfer at the point where students choose a higher-secondary institution, since CM Rise Schools' superior infrastructure and reputation may draw students from a wider catchment at exactly this transition point. Whether this inward pull at one transition coexists with weaker retention at other transitions, however, has not previously been examined, and is the specific question this paper investigates.

2.1 Research Gap

Prior comparative research on the CM Rise initiative has analysed year-on-year total enrollment and Class 10 examination outcomes, but has not analysed how enrollment moves across class levels within a single academic year, leaving open the question of whether apparent CM Rise advantages in outcomes and total enrollment are accompanied by correspondingly strong retention of students already in the system. This paper addresses that gap using previously unreported class-wise data from the same study sample.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Data Source

This paper employs a descriptive, comparative cross-sectional design [10], using class-wise (Class 9 to Class 12) enrollment records for the 2023-24 academic year for the same 20-school sample (10 CM Rise Schools and 10 other Government Schools of the Ujjain division of Madhya Pradesh) used in the parent comparative study [16]. This class-wise breakdown was collected as part of the original school records review but has not previously been analysed in published work arising from this study.

3.2 Analytical Approach

For each school, three transition ratios were computed for the 2023-24 academic year: Class 10 enrollment as a percentage of Class 9 enrollment, Class 11 enrollment as a percentage of Class 10 enrollment, and Class 12 enrollment as a percentage of Class 11 enrollment. These are cross-sectional class-size ratios within a single academic year, not a longitudinal cohort-tracking measure, and are interpreted accordingly as an indicator of relative class size and net movement (through repetition, transfer, or attrition) rather than as a direct dropout rate for a specific cohort of students. Category averages were then computed separately for the 10 CM Rise Schools and the 10 other Government Schools.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Category-wise Transition Ratios

Table 1 and Figure 1 show a mixed pattern rather than a uniform CM Rise advantage. Other Government Schools show a higher Class 9 to 10 ratio (63.9% against 60.5%) and a markedly higher Class 11 to 12 ratio (98.7% against 85.2%), both suggesting comparatively stronger retention at these two transition points. CM Rise Schools, by contrast, show a larger Class 10-to-11 increase (150.7% against 145.7%), consistent with the initiative's role in drawing students in at the point of higher-secondary stream choice [9, 16].

Table 1: Class-wise Enrollment Transition Ratios by School Category, 2023-24

Transition Point	CM Rise Schools (avg.)	Other Govt. Schools (avg.)	Difference (CM Rise – Other, pp)
Class 9 to Class 10	60.5%	63.9%	–3.4
Class 10 to Class 11	150.7%	145.7%	+5.0
Class 11 to Class 12	85.2%	98.7%	–13.5

Note: Ratios are cross-sectional class-size ratios (later class enrollment as a percentage of earlier class enrollment); pp = percentage points.

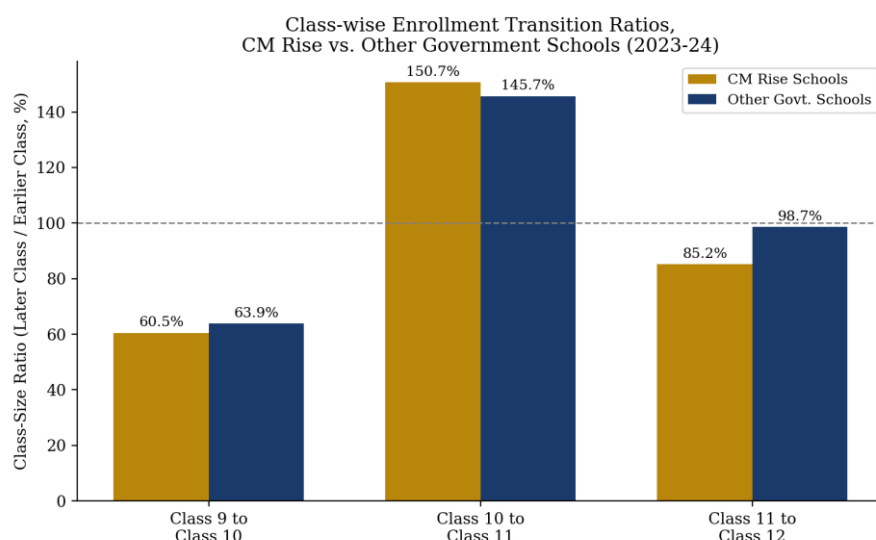


Figure 1: Class-wise Enrollment Transition Ratios, CM Rise vs. Other Government Schools (2023-24)

4.2 School-wise Class 9 to 10 Ratios

Figure 2 shows wide variation within both categories. CM Rise School Neemuch records the highest ratio in the sample (114%, indicating Class 10 enrollment exceeding Class 9), while CM Rise School Rampura records the lowest (28%). Among other Government Schools, Government Girls HSS Khawasa records a high ratio (106%) while Government HSS Kukdeshwer records a low one (30%). The presence of both CM Rise and other Government Schools at both ends of the distribution confirms that institutional category alone does not determine a school's class-wise retention pattern.

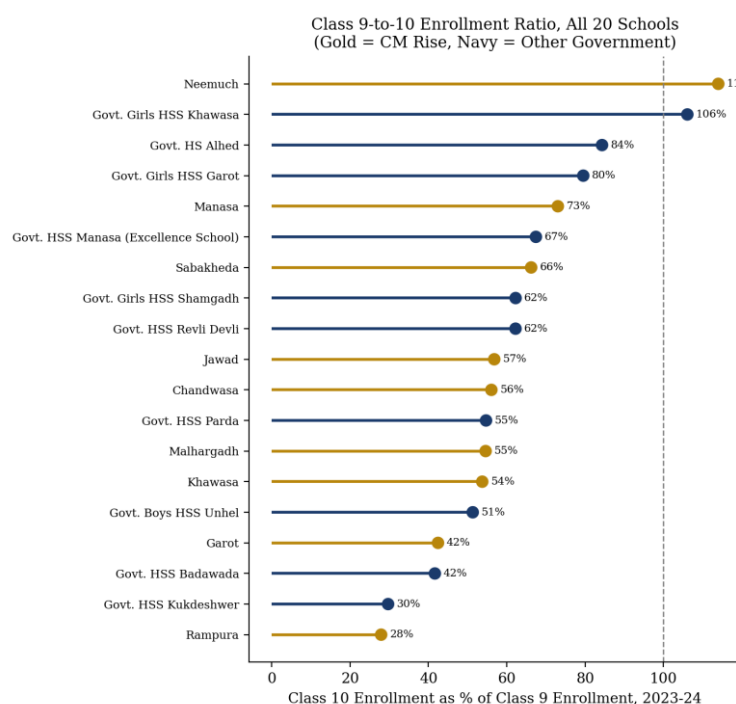


Figure 2: Class 9 to 10 Enrollment Ratio by School (Gold = CM Rise Schools; Navy = Other Government Schools)

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 A Genuine Trade-off, Not a Uniform Advantage

The finding that CM Rise Schools show weaker Class 9 to 10 and Class 11 to 12 transition ratios than other Government Schools, while showing a stronger Class 10-to-11 inward increase, is consistent with Willms' [6] framing of continued enrollment as an indicator of institutional holding power distinct from academic outcome. It suggests that CM Rise Schools' documented advantages in infrastructure and reputation [9, 16] may function primarily to attract students at the point of higher-secondary choice, rather than to retain the full cohort of students already enrolled through the secondary stage.

5.2 Interpreting the Class 10-to-11 Increase

The very large Class 10-to-11 increase recorded in both categories, but more markedly in CM Rise Schools, is plausibly explained by structural features of the Indian secondary system rather than by within-school retention alone: students from smaller, Class 9-10-only institutions elsewhere commonly transfer into larger higher-secondary schools for Class 11 [2, 3]. That CM Rise Schools show a larger such increase is consistent with their intended role as consolidated, higher-capacity institutions serving a wider catchment [9], but this same consolidation dynamic makes it more difficult to interpret CM Rise Schools' aggregate enrollment growth as evidence of superior retention of their own Class 9 and Class 10 students specifically.

5.3 Implications for Evaluating the CM Rise Initiative

For policymakers, this analysis suggests that examination-based and total-enrollment-based evaluations of CM Rise Schools, of the kind reported in prior work [14, 15, 16], should be read alongside class-wise transition data, since a school's ability to attract new students at one transition point does not by itself demonstrate an ability to retain the students already in its care at other transition points. Muralidharan's [7] caution against evaluating reform initiatives solely on the outcomes of students who remain enrolled applies directly here: if weaker Class 9 to 10 retention in CM Rise Schools reflects the departure of relatively weaker-performing students, the Class 10 board-examination advantage documented in prior work [16] may be partly a composition effect rather than solely an instructional-quality effect, a possibility this paper's data cannot rule out and which warrants dedicated follow-up research.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper's class-wise transition analysis, using previously unreported data from the same 20-school comparative study of Madhya Pradesh's CM Rise initiative, finds that CM Rise Schools' well-documented advantages in infrastructure, funding, and Class 10 examination outcomes [14, 15, 16] coexist with a comparatively weaker record of Class 9 to 10 and Class 11 to 12 enrollment retention, alongside a stronger Class 10-to-11 inward increase consistent with their role as consolidated higher-secondary destinations. This more textured picture complicates a simple reading of CM Rise Schools as uniformly superior across every dimension of school functioning, and supports Willms' [6] and Muralidharan's [7] broader arguments for evaluating school reform initiatives through retention and engagement measures as well as through examination outcomes alone.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Future monitoring of the CM Rise initiative should routinely track class-wise enrollment transition ratios alongside examination outcomes, so that retention and attraction effects can be distinguished.
2. CM Rise Schools recording low Class 9 to 10 or Class 11 to 12 ratios, such as Rampura, warrant a dedicated review of whether students are transferring, repeating, or leaving the school system altogether.

3. Future research should link individual student records across class levels, where data protection permits, to distinguish genuine dropout from inter-school transfer within this cross-sectional class-size measure.
4. Comparative evaluation of CM Rise Schools should report retention-adjusted or composition-adjusted academic achievement measures alongside raw board-examination pass rates.

8. LIMITATIONS

The transition ratios used in this paper are cross-sectional, comparing class sizes within a single academic year rather than tracking a single cohort of students longitudinally across years; they are therefore a proxy for, not a direct measure of, student-level dropout, repetition, or transfer. The analysis is confined to the same 20-school sample used in the parent study, itself confined to the Ujjain division of Madhya Pradesh, and to a single academic year (2023-24) of class-wise data.

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