



EDUCATION NEXUS POVERTY AMONG THE IRULA TRIBES

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Abstract

Education is an imperative parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy and it is an relevant avenue for upgrading the economic and social conditions of the Scheduled Tribes. The objective of the paper is to analyse the enrolment and dropout of the tribal students and to relate education of tribes with the poverty. Method of collecting sample was multistage identified random sampling techniques. The present study analyses the educational status among Irula community in Coimbatore district. Though the level of education was low, the poverty also still high in the tribal area. Many of the developing economies including India have been doing well in promoting the literacy level of their people. There is no doubt that education plays a vital role not only in the development of the country but also reducing the poverty to greater extent. The present study also confirms the same and the respondents education has a negative relationship with their poverty level.

Introduction

The United Nations reported that about 370 million tribes live in over 70 countries. India ranks first with a population of 104 million (8.6 per cent of the total population). Scheduled Tribes are socially isolated and economically marginalized communities. The Scheduled Tribe population represents one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized groups in India. Education is one of the essential force of transformation towards economic development. Tamil Nadu, is one of the major states of southern India, that consists of many tribal groups, including six primitive tribal communities.

Education is an imperative parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy and it is an relevant avenue for upgrading the economic and social conditions of the Scheduled Tribes. Literacy and educational attainment are powerful indicators of social and economic development among the backward community. Education is absolutely, an input not only for the economic development of tribes but also for the internal strength of the tribal communities, which helps them in encountering the new challenges of life. It is the single most important means by which individuals and society can improve their personal endowments, build capacity levels, overcome barriers, and expand opportunities for a sustained improvement in their well-being.

Amartya Sen recently emphasized education as an significant framework for any inclusive growth in an economy. Literacy and educational attainment are powerful indicators of social and economic development among the backward communities in India. At present, the tribes lag behind not only the general population but also the Scheduled Caste population in literacy and education. This disparity is even more marked among Scheduled Tribal women, who have the lowest literacy rates in the country (Maharatna, 2005).

For the overall development of the Scheduled Tribes, they are still far behind in almost all the standard parameters of development. They are not able to participate in the process of development, as they are not aware of most of the programmes and policies contrived for their upliftment. This is mainly due to the high proposition of illiteracy and very low level of education among the tribal people. Hence, analysing the educational status of the Scheduled Tribes and the role of governance in this direction is highly essential.

Tribal Education in India and Tamil Nadu

Education is an essential indicator for the development among of all social groups and the tribes are not exceptional. The percentage of educated tribes was only 8.54 per cent in 1961 which has increased to 63.1 per cent in 2011, but female education of tribes is only 54.4 per cent compared to male literacy of 71.7 per cent. According to the 2011 census, the Scheduled Tribe population in Tamil Nadu was 794697 (401068 males and 393629 females) constituting 1.1 per cent of the total general population. The literacy rate of the tribes is 59 per cent. 83.08 per cent of the tribal survives in hilly/rural areas and 16.91 per cent of them live in urban (town) areas. The Nilgiris and Aanamalai hills of Coimbatore are the important living location of the tribes in the Western Ghats. In Salem district 1, 19,369 tribes live and is the highest and in Karur district there are 575 tribal people, which has the lowest tribal population in the state (Census 2011).

Literature Review

There exists a substantial amount of literature on the condition of tribal education in India. A brief review is worthwhile concerning to highlight what has already been done in the field. **Das** (1999) Strongly advocated that true development requires government action to improve elementary education, safe drinking water facilities and health care, and to remove barriers against social minorities, especially women, which in turn reduce the poverty. **Ozturk** (2001) examined the education is the key to increasing economic efficiency and social consistency. By increase the value and efficiency of their labour, it helps

to raise the poor from poverty. **Okojie** (2002) verified the higher the educational attainment of the head, the higher will be household welfare and less the likelihood of the household falling into poverty. **Colclough** (2005) argued that both the direct and indirect impacts of the trends of poverty in sending states are likely to be negative. **Johnson** (2005) analysed the study has identified the negative effects of poverty on young children. **Ijaiya** (2009) analysed ensuring huge investment in education because of its importance to economic development, increase in income, increase in entrepreneurship, better understanding and utilization of existing health facilities, etc. to achieve effectively. **Diaz** (2010) analysed both the monetary and non-monetary effects of the education level of the heads of the households on poverty. **Mom Njong** (2010) analysed argued that investment in education and human capital formation are essential for economic growth and poverty reduction. **Awan and Nouman Malik et. al** (2011) results depicted that there was a negative relationship between probability of being poor and different levels of education. It means the higher levels of education reduce the probability of being poor gradually. **Borode** (2011) revealed that the curriculum of the higher education in Sub – Saharan Africa countries should be more flexible and adaptive in order to cure the usurping problem of poverty among the youth. **Stephen** (2011) literacy rate was the only positive and statistical significant impact on poverty in the short run. In the long run there is negative but significant relationship between literacy rate and poverty level.

Statement of the Problem

The backwardness of the scheduled tribes is mainly due to the high proposition of illiteracy and very low level of education among the tribal people. It is well known that the educational background of tribes is very discouraging as compared to the rest of the population.

Lack of sufficient educational institutions in tribal areas, poverty, and lack of nutritional and healthcare programmes are some of the important problems concerning the circumstances. Besides, low literacy, poor enrolment at schools and high dropouts from schools are also significant among them (Suresh and Rajasenan 2014). Hence, the educational status of the scheduled tribes and the role of governance in this direction are highly essential. Many studies on tribal education emphasize many issues including the poverty and income of the tribes. A few studies mentioned the level of the educational institutions as a cause. Some reported dropouts and reasons for it. But studies were rare with social economic and institution issues on tribal education. Among them, education is considered to be the most important as it increases the productivity of labour which in turn will be a long term solution to the poverty in the developing economies. Poverty is a persistent problem throughout the world and affects almost all aspects of the human life. India is the home above 40 crores (21.92%) (Reserve Bank of India 2013) of poor and did not have income to access a consumption basket. Of these, 83.36 per cent were in the rural areas. Such a high incidence of poverty is a matter of concern in view of the fact that poverty eradication has been one of the major objectives of the development planning. Reduction of poverty in India is, therefore vital for the attainment of national and international goals (Tamil Nadu Human Development Report- 2003). Both India and Tamil Nadu have been announcing various education schemes, including free education and scholarships at various levels to promote the literacy rate, but it is still far away from many countries including the developing ones. In this connection, an attempt has been made here to

analyse the role of education in reducing the poverty among the rural households of western Tamil Nadu with the following research question.

The objective of the paper is to analyse the enrolment and dropout of the tribal students and to relate education of tribes with the poverty.

Methodology

The present study is exclusively based on the primary data were collected from Nellithurai and Siruvani. Method of collecting sample was multistage identified random sampling techniques. The total tribal households surveyed was 323.

Result and Discussion

Table : 1 Socio Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

Si. No	Age	Hill	Plain	Total
1	Young (Below 35)	54 (24.66)	33 (31.73)	87 (26.93)
2	Middle (35-60)	142 (64.84)	61 (58.65)	203 (62.85)
3	Old (above 60)	23 (10.50)	10 (9.62)	33 (10.22)
Gender				
1	Male	202 (92.24)	92 (88.46)	294 (91.02)
2	Female	17 (7.76)	12 (11.54)	29 (8.98)
Marital status				
1	Married	195 (89.04)	84 (80.77)	279 (86.38)
2	Unmarried	2 (0.91)	3 (2.88)	5 (1.55)
3	Widow	16 (7.31)	12 (11.54)	28 (8.67)
4	Widower	6 (2.74)	5 (4.81)	11 (3.41)

Types of family				
1	Nuclear	204 (93.15)	98 (94.23)	302 (93.50)
2	Joint	15 (6.85)	6 (5.77)	21 (6.50)
Literacy Level				
1	Illiterate	98 (44.75)	33 (31.73)	131 (40.56)
2	Primary	42 (19.18)	14 (13.46)	56 (17.34)
3	Secondary	61 (27.85)	46 (44.23)	107 (33.13)
4	Higher secondary	15 (6.85)	10 (9.62)	25 (7.74)
5	Diploma	3 (1.37)	1 (0.96)	4 (1.24)
Total		219 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	323 (100.00)

Source: Computed

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage to the total

The socio – demographic characteristics of the tribes are examined with simple percentage analysis and the results are shown in table 1. Age - wise classification of the respondents is given in the table1. The respondents age group has been classified into young (<35 years), middle (35-60 years) and old (> 60 years). It could be observe from the table that 62.85 per cent of the respondents belongs to middle age groups and 26.93 per cent belongs to young group. However, the old age groups was somehow high in both Hill area and plain area.

Gender wise classification of the respondents shows that in all as high as 91.02 per cent of the respondents were male and the rest were female.

It reveal the marital status of the respondents. The status of the respondent has been classified into married, unmarried, widow and widower. In total 86.38 per cent of the respondents got married which was followed by unmarried 1.55 percent, widow 8.67 per cent and widower 3.41 per cent. In both the surveyed village, most of the respondents were married.

Regrading type of family of the respondents, 93.50 per cent of the total respondents were living in Nuclear family and the rest were living in joint family.

The literacy level of the respondents has been classified into five categories vi., illiterate primary, secondary, Higher secondary and Diploma. It could be observe that 40.56 per cent of the respondents are illiterate. Surprisingly 33.13 per cent of the respondents are studied secondary level of education. In village- wise analysis, the illiterate level dominated in both hill area and plain area. The reason behind was that they are have not interested to continue the education. Without any formal education and hence they have not moved to higher education.

Table 2. Educational Index of the Family Members

Si.No	Level of education	Hill area	Plain area	Total
1	Poorest	40 (18.26)	19 (18.27)	59 (18.27)
2	Poor	94 (42.92)	46 (44.23)	140 (43.34)
3	Medium	63 (28.77)	34 (32.69)	97 (30.03)
4	Good	22 (10.05)	5 (4.81)	27 (8.36)
Total		219 (100.00)	104 (100.00)	323 (100.00)

Source: Computed

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage to the total

Table 2 shows that education level of the family was poor (43.34%) in the hill and plain area, somehow tribes are medium level in the education (30.03%).

Table 3 Level of Poverty of the Respondents

Si.No	Poverty	Hill	Plain	Total
1	Destitute (Rs.10 - Rs15)	16 (7.31)	47 (45.19)	63 (19.50)
2	Very poor (Rs.15 - Rs.20)	26 (11.87)	33 (31.73)	59 (18.27)
3	Poor (Rs.20 – Rs.25)	46 (21.00)	15 (14.42)	61 (18.89)
4	Marginally Poor (Rs.25 – Rs.32)	48 (21.92)	7 (6.73)	55 (17.03)
Total		136 (62.10)	102 (98.08)	238 (73.68)
5	Marginally Non Poor (Rs.32 – Rs.40)	32 (14.61)	1 (0.96)	33 (10.22)
6	Better Off (Rs.40 – Rs.45)	18 (8.22)	1 (0.96)	19 (5.88)
7	Well to Do (Rs.45 – Rs.50)	15 (6.85)	0 (0.00)	15 (4.64)
8	Rich (above Rs.50)	18 (8.22)	0 (0.00)	18 (5.57)
Head Count Ratio		0.62	0.98	0.73

Source: Computed

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage to the total

The level of poverty among the tribal respondents is presented in table 3. The poverty level has been tried based on the per day expenditure (Rs 27 rural and Rs 32 for urban) from the analysis it could be noticed that about three fourths of the tribes were under poverty and about 10 percent of the tribes were alone absolutely above poverty line, the remaining 15 per cent were in between the border line of poverty.

Conclusion

Many of the developing economy, especially the tribal dominated economics were tried much to educated the tribes, but due to many reason it was not successful for may government. However, in India many of the north eastern states, including Tamil Nadu tribal educational status was poor. This study too conforms that the Irula tribes living in the foot hills of forest were unawareness of the importance of education which in turn forced them to fell in the poverty spectrum.

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