THE EFFECT OF CASTE ON SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT IN ADOLESCENTS: A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

[1]**Vijay Kumar**

(Assistant Professor & Head)

Department of Psychology

ANS College Barh (PPU), Patna (Bihar).

Abstract: Caste remains an important social, political, economic, cultural and psychological phenomenon in various spheres of Indian social life. The Indian caste system is seen as a hierarchical system where at the lower level are groups such as Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes who experience caste-based discrimination in almost all spheres of their lives. Social adjustment refers to the balanced performance of various social roles by an individual to achieve his or her real goals. The main objective of this study was to find out the effect of caste on social adjustment in adolescents. Keeping in mind the objective of this study, three hypotheses were formulated which are as follows: (i) Social adjustment of Scheduled Castes will be better than Scheduled Tribes, (ii) Social adjustment of Other Backward Castes will be better than Scheduled Castes, and (iii) Social adjustment of General Castes will be better than Other Backward Castes. For this, a total of 100 adolescents aged between 17 to 21 years were selected as samples from A N S College Barh (Patna) using the purposive sampling method. Data collection was done using the Mohshin-Shamsahd Adaptation of Bell Adjustment Inventory (1987). The data obtained was analyzed using various statistical tools like mean, SD, ANOVA, and p-value to get meaningful results. The result showed that on the level of social adjustment Scheduled Castes were better than Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Castes were better than Scheduled Castes while General Castes were better than Other Backward Castes.

Key Words: Adolescents, Caste, and Social Adjustment.

1. BACKGROUND

The caste system in India is a complex social, political, economic, cultural and psychological construct. The word 'caste' is derived from the Spanish and Portuguese words 'casta', meaning race or ethnicity, lineage, and casto, meaning pure and unmixed (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023)[1]. Various scholars, educators, etc., in an attempt to define the Indian caste concept, have invoked the importance of profession, inter-caste marriage, social class, and political power, although it is unclear how these variables relate to each other and what exactly is prioritized in everyday thinking about caste by social-actors. Social-hierarchy has figured conspicuously in scholarly explorations of caste, which prima-facie seems reasonable as it emphasizes social -stratification and social- restrictions concerning interactions between "higher" and "lower" castes. According to Thapa et al., (2021)[2], the Indian caste - system is one -of the oldest systematic, and institutionalized forms of oppression, having existed for over 3,000 years. They also stated that at the bottom of this hierarchical caste system are groups such as Dalits who experience caste-based discrimination in every sphere of life such as employment, education, health, etc. This hierarchical caste system also affects their access to other social determinants. India is a country of diverse cultures and diversities. Taking into account various local variations, Ghurye (1969)[3] has outlined six defining characteristics of the Indian caste system which are as follows: (i) a child belongs to the group of society

into which he/her is born; (ii) the caste system is hierarchical; (iii) the caste system restricts social contacts between higher and lower castes; (iv) different castes have separate residential areas; (v) occupations are generally inherited; and (6) endogamy is not prevalent. However, formal explanations of caste have been criticised given regional - variations in practice, and the flexible- nature of day-to-day interactions between castes. As Dalit activist B. R. Ambedkar, who chaired the committee that drafted India's Constitution, said: 'Caste is not some physical thing like a wall of bricks or a line of barbed wire which prevents the Hindus from mingling with each other, and therefore, must be demolished. Caste is a notion; it is a state of mind' (Ambedkar, 2014)[4]. As Ambedkar underlined, to bring about true combination, policies need to change the culture, and thus the mindset of the people. Ranjan (2020)[5] carried out a "Study of Adjustment Problems of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)" and in his study he found that caste affects the socio-economic status of the family, psychological and cognitive development of the individual, their identity formation, their moral development, their socio-emotional development and all other characteristics in any society. He also said that Indian society is based on caste, religion, language, and region. In the caste system, society is divided into four classes based on their work which are as follows: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.

Bellack et al. (1997)[6] defines the "Social Skills Model" as the individual's skills in coping with social problems and their resolution and his social competence strengthens his social adjustment. Thus, social adjustment is defined as the social competence's ability to attain desired goals. Goode and Smith (1983)[7] studied family adjustment in childhood and social adjustment in adulthood. They found in their study that the level of adjustment of children is determined by the family and social environment they get. They also said that if a person is not properly adjusted, then his psychosocial development is also not done properly. Further, Jain (2017)[8] conducted "A study of the correlation between adjustment and academic achievement". He stated that adjustment is an important aspect of human - development, which represents a continuous interaction between individuals and their environment, the main purpose of which is to establish harmonious social relationships. Bhagat (2016)[9] defined adjustment as the process by which a living organism maintains a balance between its physical, social, and psychological - needs and the external - factors that fulfil them.

Adolescence is an important transition period between childhood and adulthood, generally marking the age from puberty to adulthood. Adolescence is considered a critical time of intense psychological, physical, and social changes – as well as cognitive – development. Adolescents may experience growth - spurts, sexual - maturity, and the development of their own moral - compass. These changes can be exciting, scary, and confusing, and they often occur at different - rates. Adolescence is also a time when children become more - independent and begin to explore their own identities.

Thus, caste remains an important social, political, economic, cultural and psychological phenomenon in various spheres of Indian social life. The Indian caste system is seen as a hierarchical system where at the lower level are groups such as Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes who experience caste-based discrimination in almost all spheres of their lives. Social adjustment refers to the balanced performance of various social roles by an individual to achieve his or her real goals. Thus, the study was designed to find out the effect of caste on social adjustment in adolescents.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

o The main objective of this study was to find out the effect of caste on social adjustment in adolescents.

III. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H1: Social adjustment of Scheduled Castes will be better than Scheduled Tribes,
H2: Social adjustment of Other Backward Castes will be better than Scheduled Castes, and
H3: Social adjustment of General Castes will be better than Other Backward Castes.

3.1 METHODS OF THE STUDY

A total of 100 adolescents aged between 17 to 21 years were selected as samples from A N S College Barh (Patna) using the purposive sampling method. Data collection was done using the Mohshin-Shamsahd Adaptation of Bell Adjustment Inventory (1987). This Inventory has a total of four dimensions such as Home, Health, Social, and Emotional Adjustment. There are a total of 31 items for Home Adjustment, 29 items for Health Adjustment, 32 items for Social Adjustment, and finally 32 items for Emotional Adjustment. This inventory has a total of 124 items which is a two-point scale. On this adjustment inventory, a person can have a minimum score of '0' and a maximum score of '124'. On the Social Adjustment scale, a person can have a minimum score of '0' and a maximum score of '32'. Finally, a high score on this

inventory indicates that a person has poor adjustment while a low score indicates that a person has good adjustment. This list is very reliable and valid in the Indian context.

Table-3.1: Mohshin-Shamsahd Adaptation of Bell Adjustment Inventory (Modified from 1987)

Sr. No.	Dimension	Total Items	Range of Score	Interpretation
01.	Home Adjustment	31	0-31	High Score Indicates Poor Adjustment
02.	Health Adjustment	29	0-29	
03.	Social Adjustment	32	0-32	
04.	Emotion Adjustment	32	0-32	
Total		**124**	**0-124**	

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The data obtained was analyzed using various statistical tools like mean, SD, ANOVA, and p-value to get meaningful results.
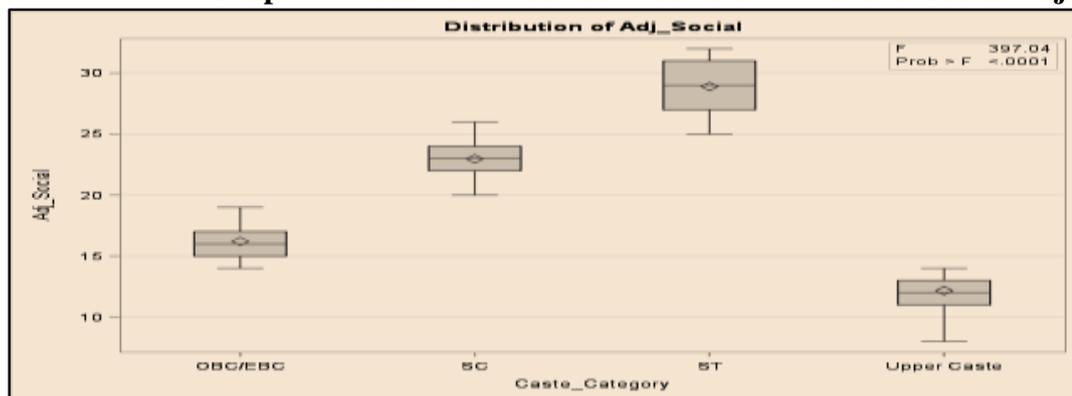
4.1 RESULTS

The main objective of this study was to know the effect of caste on social adjustment among adolescents. Analysis of the obtained data revealed that there were 4 categories of castes of adolescents: Upper Caste, OBC/EBC, SC, and ST. If we look at Table 2, it will be seen that on the social adjustment scale, upper caste has the lowest mean score with 12.17 and SD 1.58, whereas OBC/EBC has a mean score of 16.20 and SD 1.54 and a little higher than upper caste, whereas SC has a mean score of 22.97 and SD 1.33 and a little higher than OBC/EBC, lastly ST has a mean score of 28.90 and SD 2.42 and a little higher than SC (Table-2). Since a high score on the social adjustment scale indicates poor adjustment of a person while a low score indicates good adjustment. It means that the social adjustment of upper castes (UC) was better than other backward castes whereas the social adjustment of backward castes (OBC/EBC) was better than scheduled castes (SC) and the social adjustment of scheduled castes (SC) was better than scheduled tribes (ST). If we look at Table 2, it is found that DF (degree of freedom) is 3, Anova SS is 3037.76, Mean Square is 1012.59, F value is 397.04 and the p-value is <.0001 at 0.01 level of significance. It means that all three hypotheses of this study can be accepted. The three hypotheses were - that the social adjustment of scheduled castes would be better than scheduled tribes, the social adjustment of other backward castes would be better than scheduled castes, and the social adjustment of general castes would be better than other backward castes.

Table-4.1: Castes of Adolescents and their Level of Social Adjustment

Caste of Respondents	N	Mean	SD	Minimum-Maximum	DF	Anova SS	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Upper Caste	30	12.17	1.58	8-14					
OBC/ EBC	30	16.20	1.54	14-19	3	3037.76	1012.59	397.04	**<.0001**
SC	30	22.97	1.33	20-26					
ST	10	28.90	2.42	25-32					
Total	**100**								
Significance Level at 0.01									

Graph-4.1: Castes of Adolescents and their Level of Social Adjustment

V.   CONCLUSIONS

Overall, it can be said that on the level of the social adjustment Scale, Scheduled Castes (SC) were better than Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Castes (OBC) were better than Scheduled Castes while General/Upper Castes (UC) were better than Other Backward Castes. Thus, it can be said that caste remains an important social, political, economic, cultural, and psychological phenomenon in various spheres of Indian social life. The Indian caste system is seen as a hierarchical system where at the lower level are groups such as Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, and Other Backward Classes who experience caste-based discrimination in almost all spheres of their lives, and they are not able to make proper social adjustment.

REFERENCES

[1]   Oxford   English   Dictionary.   (2023).   Caste.   Available   at: https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/28546?rskey=6MoUd4&result=1

[2]   Thapa, R., van Teijlingen, E., Regmi, P. R., and Heaslip, V. (2021). *"Caste exclusion   and health discrimination in South Asia: a systematic review"*. Asia Pac. J. Public Health   33,   828–838. doi: 10.1177/10105395211014648.

[3]   Ghurye, G. S. (1969). "Caste and race in India". 5th ed Mumbai: Popular Prakashan. Jain P. (2017). *"A Study of Correlation between Adjustment and Academic Achievement"*. International Journal of Social Relevance & Concern.;5(6).

[4]   Ambedkar, B. R. (2014). "Annihilation of caste (Annotated critical edition ed.)". London: Verso.

[5]   Ranjan, Rajiv (2020). "A study of adjustments problem of scheduled caste and scheduled". The International Journal of Indian Psychology ISSN 2348-5396   (e) | ISSN: 2349-   3429 (p) Volume 8, Issue 1, DIP: 18.01.075/20200801 DOI: 10.25215/0801.075   http://www.ijip.in

[6]   Bellack A.S., Mueser K.M., Gingerich S., Agresta J. (1997). *"Social skills training for schizophrenia: A step-by-step guide"*. The Guilford Press, New York. Chromeextension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://ijip.in/wpcontent/uploads/2 020/03/18.01.075.20200801.pdf

[7] Gode R. O., Smith M. S. (1983). *"Effects of chronic disorders on adolescent   development: self, family, friends, and school"*. In: M. S. Smith, ed. Chronic disorders in   adolescence. Boston: John Wright: 31–44.

[8]   https://www.google.com/search?q=adolescence&oq=adlos&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqDAgE EAAYChixAxiABDIGCAAQRRg5MgwIARAAGAoYsQMYgAQyCQgCEAAYChiAB DIHCAMQABiABDIMCAQQQABgKGLEDGIAEMgwIBRAAGAoYsQMYgAQyDAgG EAAYChixAxiABDIJCAcQABgKGIAEMgkICBAAGAoYgAQyCQgJEAAYChiABNIB CTExNzUwajFqN6gCALACAA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 https://www.britannica.com/science/adolescence

[9]   Bhagat P. (2016). *"Comparative study of adjustment among secondary school   boys   and girls"*. International Journal of Applied Research.;2(7):91-95.