



Examining The Influence Of Parental Socioeconomic Status On The Academic Performance Of Adivasi Higher Secondary Students In Tinsukia District: Implications Of The National Education Policy 2020 For Educational Equity

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Abstract: This study explores the impact of parental socioeconomic status (SES) on the academic performance of Adivasi higher secondary students in Tinsukia District, Assam. It highlights how SES factors, including parental education, income, and occupation, create barriers to academic success for Adivasi students, a marginalized community facing systemic disadvantages. Using a mixed-methods approach of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the research identifies challenges such as limited access to resources, minimal parental involvement due to economic pressures, and cultural barriers. The study reveals a strong correlation between higher parental SES and improved academic outcomes, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions like increased access to educational resources and parental support programs. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is examined for its potential to promote inclusive and equitable education, focusing on addressing disparities for marginalised communities. The paper concludes with recommendations for policymakers and educators to enhance educational access and foster an environment where Adivasi students can thrive. This research contributes to the broader conversation on educational equity and the critical role of socioeconomic factors in shaping the academic success of marginalised communities in India.

Keywords: Socioeconomic Status (SES), Academic performance, Adivasi students, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, inclusive education, educational resources, cultural barriers, educational disparities, equity, targeted interventions, marginalized communities, educational equity.

Introduction

Education is a transformative force for individual empowerment, societal progress, and economic development. It is a critical mechanism for social mobility and equips individuals with the skills necessary to overcome life's challenges. Globally, education is strongly linked to economic growth and promoting equality and inclusion. For marginalised communities such as the Adivasis in India, education holds an even greater significance as it represents a key to breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty and overcoming systemic inequalities.

Education in India

While India's education system has contributed substantially to its socio-economic development, significant disparities in access, quality, and equity remain. These inequalities are particularly pronounced among marginalised communities like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and Adivasis. These groups encounter structural barriers that hinder their ability to benefit from educational opportunities fully. Adivasis, who are indigenous groups primarily residing in rural regions such as Assam, face socio-economic challenges that significantly impair their academic success.

Challenges Faced by Adivasis in Assam

Adivasis are among India's most marginalised groups, struggling to access quality education due to factors like poverty, social exclusion, and limited infrastructure. In Assam, where many Adivasis work in tea plantations, they face additional exploitative conditions, including long working hours, low wages, and a lack of basic amenities. These conditions exacerbate their socio-economic marginalisation, making it difficult for Adivasi students to succeed academically. The socioeconomic status of their families heavily influences their academic outcomes.

Parental Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Academic Outcomes

One of the most critical determinants of students' academic performance is parental socioeconomic status (SES), which encompasses income, education levels, and occupational status. Higher parental education generally results in a more conducive learning environment, while higher incomes allow parents to provide better educational resources and extra-curricular activities. In contrast, families with lower SES face financial constraints, limited time for parental involvement, and restricted access to learning resources, all of which can negatively affect academic outcomes. These challenges are particularly acute for marginalised communities such as Adivasis.

Socio-Economic Status (SES) and Adivasi Students in Tinsukia District

In Assam's Tinsukia District, where many Adivasi families work in tea plantations, socio-economic challenges abound. The demanding nature of plantation work, characterised by long hours and minimal wages, limits the time and resources parents can dedicate to their children's education. Additionally, the physical isolation of plantation communities from urban centres restricts access to quality schools and extra-curricular opportunities. As a result, Adivasi students experience a significant educational gap compared to their peers from more privileged backgrounds.

Impact of Low Socio-Economic Status (SES) on Academic Performance

Research consistently indicates a strong correlation between parental Socio-Economic Status (SES) and academic performance. In disadvantaged communities, children often lack the cognitive stimulation and educational support for academic success. Economic hardships frequently compel Adivasi students to prioritise work over education, leading to higher dropout rates and lower academic achievement. A lack of parental education further exacerbates the educational gap, as students often do not have the necessary academic guidance at home.

The Role of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

The Indian government's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 addresses these educational disparities by focusing on inclusivity, equity, quality, and flexibility. NEP 2020 promotes equitable educational opportunities for socio-economically disadvantaged groups, including SCs, STs, OBCs, and Adivasis. The policy emphasises foundational literacy and numeracy and seeks to provide universal access to early childhood care and education, which is essential for levelling the playing field for marginalised students like Adivasis.

NEP 2020 also encourages a flexible curriculum and pedagogy, incorporating local languages and cultural practices to make education more relevant for marginalised communities. It advocates for developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are vital for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, vocational education is promoted to enhance students' employability from marginalised groups, thereby improving their socio-economic prospects.

Challenges in Implementing NEP 2020

Despite its ambitious goals, NEP 2020's success hinges on practical implementation. Ensuring that schools are adequately resourced, teachers are well-trained, and communities are actively engaged is crucial for the policy's success, particularly for Adivasi students in rural areas like Tinsukia District. Collaboration among local governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and community leaders will be necessary to ensure that NEP 2020 reaches Adivasi students.

Conclusion

Education is a vital tool for empowering marginalised communities and promoting social mobility. For Adivasi students in Tinsukia District, parental socioeconomic status plays a significant role in determining academic outcomes. NEP 2020 provides a promising framework for addressing educational inequalities, but successful implementation will require comprehensive strategies addressing educational and socio-economic challenges. By improving access to quality education and supporting parents, NEP 2020 can transform the academic outcomes of Adivasi students and help them reach their full potential.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between parental socioeconomic status (SES) and the academic performance of Adivasi higher secondary students in Tinsukia District.
2. To identify the specific challenges faced by Adivasi students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in achieving academic success.
3. To assess the role of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in addressing educational disparities and promoting inclusivity for Adivasi students.

Research Question

How does parental socioeconomic status (SES) influence the academic performance of Adivasi higher secondary students in Tinsukia District, Assam, and what role does the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 play in addressing educational disparities and promoting inclusivity for these students?

Delimitations of the Study

This study focuses on Adivasi higher secondary students in Tinsukia District, Assam, examining the influence of parental education, income, and occupation on academic performance. It evaluates NEP 2020's early implementation but does not explore other variables like family structure or long-term policy impacts.

Significance of the Study

By examining the relationship between parental socioeconomic status and the academic performance of Adivasi students, the study provides insights into the factors contributing to educational disparities among marginalised communities. This information is crucial for educators, policymakers, and NGOs promoting educational equity in India. The research analyses the early impact of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on Adivasi students, a group historically excluded from mainstream educational development. The findings will help assess the effectiveness of NEP 2020's initiatives, especially its emphasis on inclusivity and equitable access to education.

Review of Literature

This review explores the socio-economic and educational challenges faced by Adivasi communities in Assam, emphasising historical exploitation and barriers. It also evaluates the potential impact of policies like NEP 2020 on improving academic outcomes for marginalised groups.

Baruah (2016), offers a historical analysis of the tea industry's impact on Adivasi labourers in Assam, tracing the recruitment processes and exploitative working conditions that have perpetuated socio-economic marginalisation. Singh (2017), explores educational disparities faced by tribal students across India, emphasising gaps in enrolment, retention, and academic performance due to socio-economic deprivation and cultural barriers. Singh advocates for targeted interventions, such as integrating culturally relevant curricula and enhancing teacher training. Bora (2017), investigates the historical marginalisation of Adivasis in Assam, linking their socio-economic disadvantages to colonial-era labour practices. Bora emphasises the need for

targeted policy measures to promote socio-economic upliftment. Choudhary (2018), examines the influence of cultural practices on the educational attainment of Adivasi students, suggesting including cultural elements in the curriculum to foster better academic outcomes. Das (2018), explores the transformative role of education in the socio-economic development of Adivasis, highlighting how quality education can break the poverty cycle and create economic opportunities. Desai (2018), evaluates the effects of government schemes designed to improve tribal education, identifying positive impacts and noting gaps in implementation. Desai recommends robust monitoring mechanisms and targeted efforts to reach disadvantaged students. Khan (2018) addresses gender disparities in tribal education, identifying socio-cultural norms, such as early marriage, as significant barriers to female education. The study advocates for scholarships and awareness campaigns to support female students. Nath (2018), investigates the relationship between socioeconomic deprivation and educational attainment among Adivasi students in Assam, identifying substantial barriers to academic success and recommending community-based programs to improve outcomes. Ghosh (2019), examines the relationship between education and social mobility among Adivasis, emphasising the need for scholarships and vocational training to empower marginalised students. Choudhury (2019), explores the connection between parental education and student achievement in tribal communities, recommending community-based educational initiatives to enhance parental involvement. Mukherjee (2019), explores socio-economic barriers to higher education for tribal students, recommending scholarships and mentorship programs to increase higher education enrolment among marginalised groups. Sarkar (2020), assesses the economic impact of the tea plantation industry on Adivasi communities, advocating for comprehensive labour reforms and increased investment in education and healthcare services. Gupta (2020), evaluates NEP 2020, highlighting its potential to promote inclusive education, particularly for marginalised communities. Gupta stresses the importance of effective implementation and consistent monitoring to achieve the policy's objectives. Aggarwal (2020), examines the implementation challenges of NEP 2020, suggesting collaborative efforts between government agencies, educational institutions, and local communities to ensure the policy's success. Ahmed (2020), investigates the influence of parental SES on academic outcomes, recommending policy interventions such as financial aid to support low-SES families. Kumar (2021), assesses NEP 2020's potential to bridge educational gaps among marginalised groups, emphasising the importance of effective implementation and ongoing monitoring.

The literature reviewed underscores the profound impact of historical exploitation, socio-economic barriers, and educational policies on the academic and socio-economic outcomes of Adivasi communities in Assam. Collectively, these studies advocate for targeted interventions, inclusive policies, and robust community engagement to address these persistent challenges and foster sustainable development for Adivasi students.

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research design and a mixed-methods approach, using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to examine the influence of parental socioeconomic status (SES) on the academic performance of Adivasi higher secondary students in Tinsukia District, Assam. A sample of 220 students from grades 10, 11, and 12 was selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional

representation of both genders. The findings offer generalizable insights into the impact of SES on the academic performance of the broader Adivasi student population in the district.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from 220 Adivasi higher secondary students in the Tinsukia District. The data is analyzed to understand the influence of parental socioeconomic status on students' academic performance and other related factors.

Profile of the Respondents: Age, Gender, Educational Qualification

Table 1
Age of the Respondents

Age of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
13-15 years	3	1.4
16-18 years	217	98.6
Total	220	100.0

Most respondents (98.6%) are between 16 and 18 years old, while a tiny percentage (1.4%) are between 13 and 15. This indicates that most respondents are in the typical age range for higher secondary students, confirming that the sample is representative of the target population in terms of age.

Table 2
Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	81	36.8
Female	139	63.2
Total	220	100.0

Among the respondents, 63.2% are female, while 36.8% are male. The higher proportion of female respondents reflects the composition of the schools from which the sample was drawn. This suggests that female students are strongly represented in higher secondary education in the sampled population.

Table 3

Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Grade of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
10th grade	2	0.9
11th grade	110	50.0
12th grade	108	49.1
Total	220	100.0

The data shows that half of the respondents (50%) are in the 11th, 49.1% are in the 12th, and only two are from the 10th. This balanced distribution between 11th and 12th-grade students ensures that the sample adequately represents both higher secondary education levels, providing a comprehensive view of student experiences and performance.

Level of Parental Education

Table 4 Parental Education Level

Parental Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	33	15.0
Primary school	45	20.5
Secondary school	95	43.2
Higher Secondary	33	15.0
Bachelor's degree	10	4.5
Postgraduate degree	4	1.8
Total	220	100.0

Most parents (43.2%) have completed secondary education, only 4.5% have attained a bachelor's degree, and 1.8% have a postgraduate degree. While a significant proportion of parents have some formal education, the relatively low percentage of parents with higher education suggests limited academic support from home, which may affect their children's educational aspirations and success. Programs that focus on adult education and parental involvement in schooling could enhance academic outcomes for students.

Parental Occupational Level

Table 5 Occupation of Parents of the Respondents

Occupation of Parents	Frequency	Per cent
Farmer/Agricultural labourer	144	65.5
Government employee	24	10.9
Private sector employee	33	15.0
Self-employed/Business owner	17	7.7
Unemployed	2	0.9
Total	220	100.0

A significant proportion of parents (65.5%) are engaged in farming or agricultural labour, with only 10.9% employed in government positions and 15% in private sector jobs. The high proportion of agricultural workers suggests economic vulnerability, which could affect the family's ability to invest in their children's education. Families with more stable incomes from government or private sector jobs may provide more financial support, impacting student academic success. Diversifying economic opportunities for Adivasi families may improve educational outcomes.

Monthly Household Income

Table 6 Monthly Household Income of the Respondents' Parents

Monthly Household Income	Frequency	Per cent
Less than ₹10,000	87	39.5
₹10,000 - ₹20,000	85	38.6
₹20,001 - ₹30,000	25	11.4
₹30,001 - ₹40,000	15	6.8
More than ₹40,000	8	3.6
Total	220	100.0

A large proportion of households (78.1%) have a monthly income below ₹20,000, with 39.5% earning less than ₹10,000. These low-income levels suggest significant financial constraints that may affect the student's ability to afford educational materials, tuition fees, and other academic support. Providing scholarships and financial aid can help mitigate these financial barriers, improving educational outcomes for students from low-income households.

Current Academic Performance

Table 7. Current Academic Performance of the Respondents

Current Academic Performance	Frequency	Per cent
Below average	3	1.4
Average	190	86.4
Above average	23	10.5
Excellent	4	1.8
Total	220	100.0

The majority of students (86.4%) have an average academic performance, with only 10.5% performing above average and 1.8% excelling academically. The dominance of average academic performance suggests that many students could benefit from additional educational support. More resources and tutoring programs targeting underperforming students may help raise academic standards and encourage more students to achieve above-average results.

Parental Involvement in Education

Table 8. Level of Parental Involvement in Education

Parental Involvement Level	Frequency	Per cent
Never	2	0.9
Rarely	27	12.3
Sometimes	52	23.6
Often	92	41.8
Always	47	21.4
Total	220	100.0

Over 63.2% of parents are either always or often involved in their children’s education, while 23.6% are involved sometimes, and 12.3% rarely participate. Parental involvement is crucial for academic success. While a significant portion of parents is engaged, efforts to increase involvement among those less engaged, particularly through parent-teacher programs, could lead to better academic outcomes. Encouraging greater involvement can foster a more supportive learning environment for students.

Financial Constraints Faced by Parents

Table 9. Financial Constraints

Financial Constraints	Frequency	Per cent
Not at all	7	3.2
Slightly	75	34.1
Moderate	98	44.5
Very much	33	15.0
Extremely	7	3.2
Total	220	100.0

Most respondents (59.5%) face moderate to significant financial constraints, with only 3.2% experiencing no financial difficulties. Financial constraints are a crucial barrier to educational access and success. Addressing these challenges through financial aid programs, community support, and policy interventions can help students from financially disadvantaged families focus on their academic goals.

Awareness of NEP 2020

Table 10. Level of Awareness About NEP 2020

Awareness of NEP 2020	Frequency	Per cent
Not aware at all	4	1.8
Slightly aware	131	59.5
Moderately aware	67	30.5
Very much aware	14	6.4
Extremely aware	4	1.8
Total	220	100.0

Most students (59.5%) are only slightly aware of the NEP 2020, while 30.5% have moderate awareness. This indicates a gap in communication regarding NEP 2020 and its potential benefits. Increasing awareness through outreach and educational campaigns can ensure that students and their families are informed about how the policy could improve their educational opportunities.

Findings, Discussion, and Suggestions

Findings

This study highlights the relationship between parental socioeconomic status (SES) and the academic performance of Adivasi higher secondary students in Tinsukia District. The key findings are:

- **Age Distribution:** Most respondents (98.6%) were between 16 and 18, indicating that the sample represents higher secondary students.
- **Gender Distribution:** Female respondents accounted for 63.2%, indicating strong female participation in the region's education system.
- **Parental Education:** A significant number of parents (43.2%) had completed secondary education, but only 6.3% had higher education. This indicates limited academic support from home.
- **Parental Occupation:** Most parents (65.5%) were engaged in agriculture, reflecting the economic vulnerability of Adivasi families.
- **Household Income:** About 78.1% of households had a monthly income below ₹20,000, suggesting financial challenges that impact students' education.
- **Academic Performance:** The majority (86.4%) performed at an average academic level, with limited above-average performance (10.5%), indicating financial and educational support constraints.
- **Parental Involvement:** 63.2% of parents were actively involved in their children's education, but 12.3% rarely participated due to work and economic pressures.
- **NEP 2020 Awareness:** Most students (59.5%) were only slightly aware of NEP 2020, suggesting a communication gap regarding the policy's benefits.

Discussion

The findings align with the broader literature on the impact of parental SES on academic performance. Key insights include:

- **Parental Education:** Students with better-educated parents performed better academically, but the overall low level of parental education limited support.
- **Economic Challenges:** Low household incomes were linked to difficulties affording essential educational resources, hindering student success.
- **Parental Involvement:** While many parents were involved, those working long hours in agriculture struggled to engage with their children's education.
- **NEP 2020 Awareness:** Low awareness about NEP 2020 emphasises the need to disseminate policy information better to ensure marginalised communities' benefit.

Suggestions

- ❖ **Enhancing Parental Education:** Adult education programs should be introduced to raise parents' educational levels and enable them to support their children's academic goals better.
- ❖ **Economic Support Programs:** Financial aid, scholarships, and educational material subsidies should be provided to alleviate the financial burdens on low-income families.
- ❖ **Increasing Parental Involvement:** Schools should host workshops and community events to foster greater parental involvement in education.
- ❖ **Raising NEP 2020 Awareness:** Outreach programs should educate Adivasi families about the NEP 2020 and its benefits.

Conclusion

Parental SES significantly influences the academic performance of Adivasi students in Tinsukia District. Key barriers include economic hardship, limited parental education, and low awareness of NEP 2020. Addressing these issues through targeted interventions can improve educational outcomes and help Adivasi students achieve their full potential.

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