EXCLUSION AND INDIAN SCHOOL EDUCATION: A META-ANALYSIS

[1]Prof. Navaneeta Rath, [2]Dr. Mona Lisa Bal, [3]Prof. Geetanjali Dash

[1]Prof. in Sociology, [2]Chairperson, [3]Vice Chancellor

[1]Utkal University, [2]KIIT International School, [3]Berhampur University, Odisha

Abstract: Over the years, there has been a surge in education-related studies, conducted in diverse thematic, temporal, and spatial contexts with the employment of different designs, methods, and tools. School exclusion is a major thematic area that has been continuing to date. In the realm of Educational Sociology and Educational Policies, addressing this proliferation of literature and emerging knowledge necessitates well-conducted systematic reviews and meta-analyses to bring to the forefront the micro problems embedded in communities that trigger school exclusion and make it a chronic issue despite strong policy measures to overcome it. With this backdrop, the present article makes an earnest attempt to review articles on exclusion and exclusion syndrome noted in Indian schools, its trend, the reformative policy measures, and the impacts of such policies on ending exclusion. A plethora of literature generated through field research and policy documents related to each of the variables and mediating variables have been considered for this study. Literature has been pooled from Google, Google Scholar, Jester, Science Direct, ProQuest, American.edu, and Scopus. Studies relating to both global and national scenarios have been analyzed. Based on data quality, focus area, rigorous procedures, and the removal of replicas, appropriate literature was found from various sources, and the ensuing works were examined. The PICO framework has been used to break a problem down into searchable components for review and meta-analysis. Further, the meta-analysis paper has tried to pinpoint the nature of exclusion noted in Indian schools and the lacunae of the school-inclusive policy i.e. RTE,2009 with an expectation that the outcomes can serve as policy feeders to make school education more inclusive.

Key Words: Meta-analysis, Exclusion, School exclusion, Deprivations, Inclusion and Implementation

I. INTRODUCTION

The past few decades have witnessed a significant surge in education-related studies, conducted in diverse temporal and spatial contexts, involving different subjects, and employing varied designs, methods, and tools. School education and exclusion have been seen from various disciplinary lenses. Consequently, the conclusions drawn from these studies often present a heterogeneous landscape. In the realm of Educational Sociology and Educational Policies, addressing this proliferation of literature and emerging knowledge necessitates well-conducted systematic reviews and meta-analyses. It is widely acknowledged that complex issues cannot be adequately addressed by individual studies, and even small-scale investigations may not suffice for micro-level problems. Therefore, a collective body of information derived from numerous investigations forms the foundation of scientific progress (Hunter et al., 1982, p.10). Systematic reviews, by synthesizing data from multiple studies, aim to streamline this wealth of information, offering researchers and readers a more effective means of accessing and comprehending the evolving landscape of education research (Green, 2005). However, it becomes pertinent to mention here that a meta-analysis goes a step forward of systematic review. As Jones,et.al. (2008) describes meta-analysis as a methodology for the thorough examination of evidence to create a unified synthesis of results. It involves the judicious application of statistical methods to amalgamate findings from various studies into a singular "pooled estimate" when deemed appropriate. In this article, the authors diligently undertake a meta-analysis of the literature concerning school education in India and the syndrome of exclusion, making a concerted effort to contribute to our understanding of this important field.

II. THE METHODOLOGY

A large number of academic literature and policy documents related to each of the variables and mediating variables have been considered for this study. Literature has been pooled from Google, Google Scholar, Jester, Science Direct, ProQuest, American.edu, and Scopus. Studies relating to both global and national scenarios have been analyzed. Based on data quality, focus area, rigorous procedures, and the removal of replicas, appropriate literature was found from various sources, and the ensuing works were examined. The PICO framework has been used to break a problem down into searchable components for review and meta-analysis.

Further, it needs to be mentioned here that this article will focus on the twin variables of exclusion and the Indian school system with a focus on the exclusion syndrome noted in Indian schools, its trend, the reformative policy measures, and the impacts of such policies in ending exclusion. These literature analyses are made in a stepwise manner.

III. EXCLUSION STUDIES

In the present section, an attempt has been made by the researchers to locate the emergence of the term social exclusion, its characteristics, its dimensions, and its dynamics. In this effort, a total number of forty-three articles and books have been analyzed by the authors to reach a comprehensive picturization of the terminology and its operation in the current society. In this context, a meta-synthesis of about forty articles has been made in this section which is followed by a meta-analysis.

Social exclusion as emerged in the writings of Rene Lenoir, is a multifaceted concept involving interconnected processes and issues. The concept has significantly penetrated discussions and writings on poverty and deprivation, with a substantial and rapidly expanding body of literature dedicated to the topic. Lenoir's initial work on social exclusion has spurred extensive literature, significantly expanding the catalogue of socially excluded categories. The updated understanding of these processes has not only sparked an engaging research agenda but has also acknowledged the significant societal transformations since the late twentieth century. This paradigm shift, as noted by Brugué et al. (2002) and Room (1995), carries implications for both social research and the direction of social policies.

Social exclusion is a relative concept, indicating that an individual's exclusion should be understood in comparison to other societal groups rather than in isolation (Atkinson, 1998). It involves agency, highlighting the active processes of exclusion and emphasizing power dynamics and individual factors associated with such exclusion (Atkinson, 1998). Additionally, social exclusion is multi-dimensional, encompassing various domains such as neighbourhood and community exclusion, limited access to services and amenities, strained social relations, financial constraints, socio-cultural factors, and restricted civic participation (Buffel et al., 2013; Walsh et al., 2017; Scharf et al., 2005; Van Regenmortel et al., 2016). Overall, it is a dynamic and evolving process, with individuals and groups transitioning in and out of exclusion and encountering different forms of exclusion over time (Silver, 2007; Walsh et al., 2017). In the same vein Popay et al., (2008, p. 2) describe social exclusion as a complex and dynamic phenomenon shaped by uneven power dynamics operating across various dimensions, namely economic, political, social, and cultural. These processes manifest at diverse levels such as the individual, household, group, community, national, and global scales. It is manifested through the disparities in access to resources, capabilities, and rights, ultimately contributing to inequalities in myriad forms.

Sen (2000) observes social exclusion is marked by three key characteristics: the denial of equal opportunities across various domains, its integration within social interrelations leading to partial or complete exclusion from societal participation, and the resultant deprivation and human poverty experienced by excluded social groups due to restricted access and opportunities. This multifaceted phenomenon encompasses unequal opportunity, social interrelations, and the consequent deprivation experienced by marginalized groups.

Social exclusion is often viewed as a potential outcome stemming from various risk factors, with the specific nature of this exclusion left unstated. Several studies prefer an 'indirect' approach, outlining factors or indicators that impact the risk of social exclusion rather than explicitly defining the term. The relevance of intersectionality to social exclusion lies in its recognition that individuals often face multiple forms of disadvantage and marginalization, leading to heightened discrimination and adverse health outcomes. According to Havinsky (2014), inequities are not singularly caused but emerge from the intersections of various social positions, power dynamics, and experiences. An examination of the literature regarding the forces behind social exclusion, undertaken for the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in 2004, highlighted three overarching macro-level drivers. The study contends that "Poverty, inequality, and social exclusion" are influenced in both upward and downward directions by three key contextual factors: demographics, the labour market, and social policy (Bradshaw et al., 2004, p. 9). Certain theorists argue that the enduring nature of social exclusion, as highlighted by Room (1995) and Barnes (2005), is a crucial element. It is likely accurate to assert that the prolonged existence of poverty, deprivation, and various disadvantages intensifies their adverse effects, particularly in terms of influencing future life opportunities.

Silver (1995) highlights that individuals may face exclusion from various aspects such as livelihood, employment, property, education, citizenship, and more. This diverse range includes exclusion from economic opportunities, social structures, and basic human dignities, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of social exclusion. It has adverse implications on health, academic performance, and access to opportunities like housing and employment. Extensive research in social psychology has seen a notable surge in exploring the origins and repercussions of social exclusion, which spans from contributing to poor well-being to influencing antisocial behaviour and reduced access to social justice. (Abrams, Hogg & Marques, 2005).

Social exclusion is a concept marked by diverse meanings and interpretations, with varying definitions emphasizing groups vulnerable to exclusion, the nature of exclusion, associated problems, operative processes, and levels, or the involved actors and agents. This variability is evident in the discussions on social exclusion, as highlighted by Mathieson et al. (2008). Social exclusion encompasses more than the deprivation of resources, goods, and services; it also involves the incapacity to engage in typical societal relationships and activities across economic, social, cultural, or political domains. It is characterized as an intricate and multidimensional process, constituting not merely a negative state but a disruptive factor affecting both individual and societal progress in terms of social and economic development (Levitas, et.al. 2007, Piranni,2011). Over the year's social exclusion studies have been initiated in the study of various marginalized groups. EU social policies, including works by Abrahamson (1995), Atkinson and Davoudi (2000), Béland (2007), Bernhard (2006), Daly (2006), McDevitt (2003), and Silver (2007), have extensively examined the concept of social exclusion. In the realm of lifelong learning, research has specifically delved into socially excluded groups such as youth, migrants, mental health care service users, older adults, and working-class adults, as well as various programs and delivery modes explored by researchers like De Greef, Verté, and Segers (2012), Patterson et al. (2016), Ravenscroft, Dellow, Brites, Jorge, and Catalão (2018), and Webb (2006).

Estivill (2003:19) contends that social exclusion should be viewed as the cumulative result of interconnected processes, marked by successive disruptions originating within the core of the economy, politics, and society. These processes gradually lead to the distancing and marginalization of individuals, groups, communities, and territories, positioning them in a subordinate stance concerning centres of power, resources, and dominant values.

David Miliband(, 2006, p. 3, 7) emphasizes the existence of social exclusion in various dimensions, distinguishing between "wide exclusion," which pertains to individuals deprived on a single indicator, "deep exclusion," referring to those excluded on multiple counts, and "concentrated exclusion," indicating the concentration of issues in specific geographical areas. Miliband argued that a more recognizable definition of social exclusion aligns with those facing the most significant disadvantages in society.

Thorat (2008) contends that seeking legislative representation for women and religious minorities. discrimination based on gender and religion has resulted in multiple forms of exclusion in Indian society, encompassing caste, ethnicity, and social identities. Addressing these issues requires inclusive policies to alleviate deprivation faced by marginalized groups, as recent development experiences have left certain communities feeling that the benefits have not been equitably shared. This has led to demands for group-specific policies, such as extending reservations to the private sector for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, securing reservations in public education institutions for Other Backward Classes, and seeking legislative representation for women and religious minorities.

Focusing on social exclusion rooted in historical divisions along caste, tribe, and gender lines, the 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in India' Report of the World Bank (2013) emphasizes structural inequalities hinder the entire population of the country from seizing economic opportunities. This report also reveals that cultural systems perpetuate these inequalities, forming traps that impede disadvantaged groups from breaking free, with exclusion stemming from disparities in opportunities, access to markets, and voice and agency.

Puri (2014) states that India's historical divisions based on caste, religion, and gender have led to widespread exclusion, affecting minorities, Dalits, tribals, widows, sex workers, migrants, and nomadic tribes. Social exclusion also extends to communities displaced by pro-business development projects, slum-dwellers, the poor, the homeless, child labourers, and street children, with both the state and society contributing to various forms of exclusion.

As per the documentation of the Indian Exclusion Report (2015) the term 'exclusion' encompasses both outright denials and discriminatory access, often described as adverse inclusion, to public goods for individuals and groups. The Exclusion Report emphasizes the responsibility of the state in either preventing, enabling, or exacerbating exclusion. It is argued that a democratic state has a moral obligation to counteract exclusion caused by social or market forces, ensuring equitable access to all public goods for every individual.

Kumbhar (2017) asserts that social exclusion in India manifests in various forms, with caste-based exclusion being more significant than others. The study of social exclusion has been a lateral entrant into the Indian discourses. Krishnan (2018) extensively relies on almost seven decades of personal experiences in the field to explore the dynamics of social exclusion, as well as the various movements and initiatives aimed at achieving social justice in India. The author, a distinguished advocate for social justice for marginalized social classes, delves deep into the origins of discrimination within Indian society. The narrative not only elucidates the persistence of caste-based discrimination but also provides insights into effective strategies for combating it. The volume takes a comprehensive look at the caste system and its socio-economic implications, particularly from the viewpoint of Dalits and Socially and Educationally Backward Classes.

Pankaj (2022) conducts a thorough analysis of the social exclusion processes within the availability, accessibility, and affordability aspects of welfare programs, exploring the state and societal roles in perpetuating discrimination against Dalits. Focusing on the identification of beneficiaries and the delivery of state-sponsored services, he delves into the discriminatory mechanisms, especially within programs directly addressing poverty eradication and employment, employing the perspective of social exclusion to scrutinize caste discrimination in welfare initiatives.

Estivill (2003); Madanipour et al.(2015) and Acheampong & Wiafe (2013)write about the way social exclusion is ignored by Indian policy planners. These authors visualise that social exclusion in India is a critical issue that has been overlooked in mainstream policy, which primarily focuses on poverty rather than addressing the distinct problem of exclusion. Despite their interrelation, poverty is often treated as both a cause and consequence of exclusion, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive approach to tackle these interconnected challenges.

Thorat, Aryama, and Negi (2007); suggests that pro-poor policies addressing individual exclusion should concentrate on enhancing individual capabilities and entitlements, while policies addressing group exclusion need to focus on the entire social/cultural group, given that the basis of exclusion is collective rather than individual. Recent discussions on discrimination policies in Indian society have been marred by confusion in distinguishing between individual and group exclusion, leading to unnecessary debates.

Nandwani (2016) denounces the efficacy of the affirmative policies of the government, the welfare measures and the employment generation programmes of the government in ending social exclusion in the country. The phenomenon according to the author is so deeply entrenched into the system that, it becomes problematic on the part of the government to arrest it through policy measures. Galtung (1969) talks about the institutionalized structure, and culture in India perpetuating social exclusion where the inclusion of the so-called excluded becomes an unreachable target.

A meta-analysis of the reviews on exclusion brings to the forefront that social exclusion as a concept is of Western origin, though it has persisted in India for a long. Further, the concept, dimensions, dynamics, and measures of social exclusion are more dealt with by international articles and policy reviews while in the Indian context, social exclusion research remains confined to caste, class, ethnicity, and gender. Few studies look at the policy limitations in addressing the issue of social exclusion due to its deep rooting in the social structure and culture. Out of a survey of forty-three articles, it is noted that there are almost 32 international write-ups that have appeared within the ambit of the meta-analysis while only 11 articles are of national origin which is projected in Graph No. 1.1.
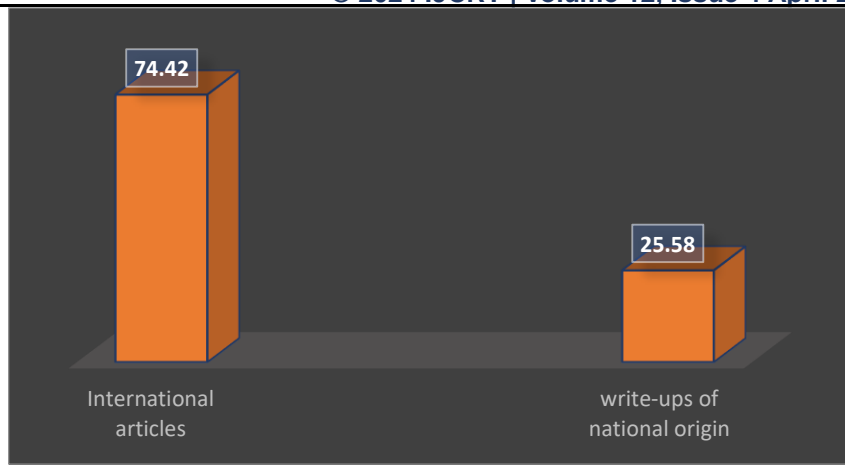
Graph No. 1.1: Classification of articles as per their origin

Out of the international articles thirty-two in number dealing with the definitional, characteristics, dimensions, and measures of social exclusion, it is noted that maximum belong to dimension aspects, followed by definitional aspect, followed by characteristics and measures aspect respectively. The distribution is projected in Graph No. 1.2
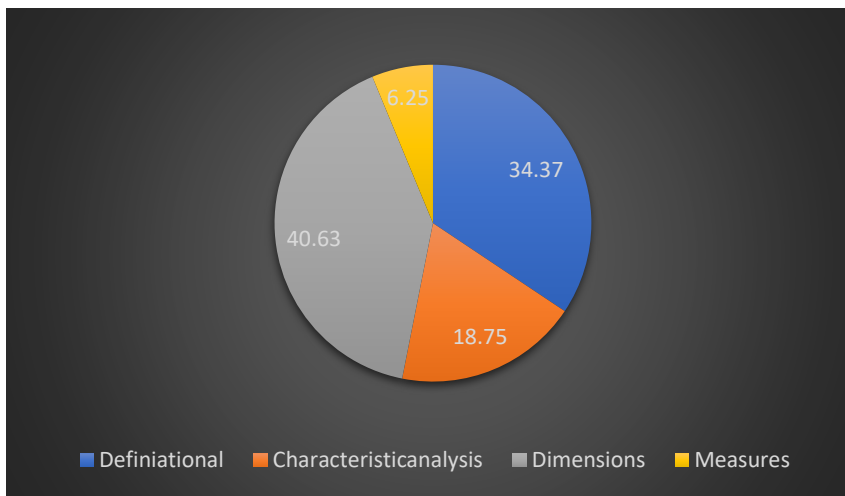
Graph No. 1.2: Distribution of the international articles on the basis of their nature

Further, the meta-analysis shows that the proliferation of literature on social exclusion has not taken a homogenous pace. In the first decade of the present millennium, it is maximum, followed by the second decade which gives a clear-cut impression that the concept is capturing public attention of late. The decadal growth of literature on the concept that has emerged in the present sample frame is projected in Graph No. 1.3.
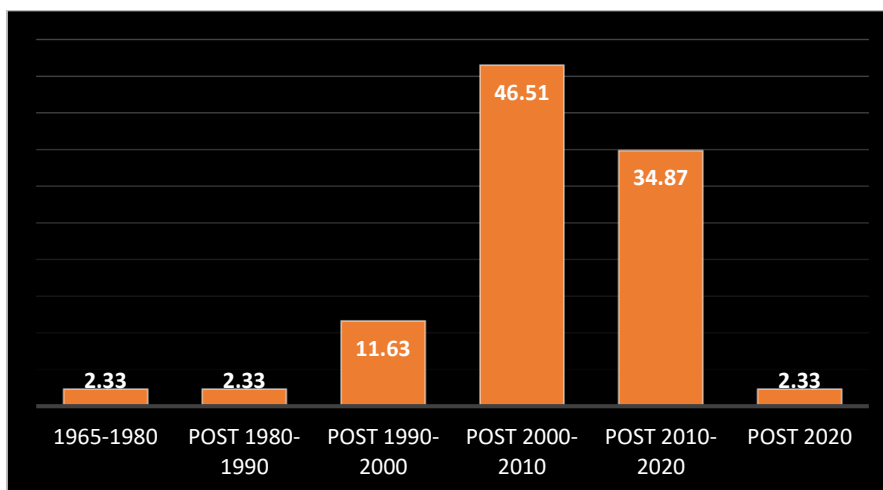
Graph No. 1.3.: Decadal literature boom on Social Exclusion

IV. SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND THE INDIAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Indian system of education is plagued by a syndrome of exclusion. This has been manifested for long, as it was trapped by an elitist dominance. According to studies on educational stratification, despite advancements in education, educational disparities between various socioeconomic strata persist and occasionally even get worse (Halsey, Heath, and Ridge 1980; Hauser and Featherman 1976). From the system of the monarchy to colonial rule, the Indian system of education was male-dominated and monopolized by the elitist section of the society. So, exclusion in school education is a prolonged scenario in the Indian context. In the same vein, Bhatty, et.al.(2014) spell out that despite government efforts, a significant number of children are still highly vulnerable to exclusion from education due to various barriers, leading to dropout. Socioeconomic status closely correlates with educational access, causing heightened exclusion for marginalized children. Studies indicate that the Government of India has framed many progressive policies and programmes to end exclusion and to ensure an inclusive system of education in the country. But irrespective of all these, Kaushal (2012) highlights the significant disparities in both the quality and quantity of elementary education brought about by the RTE Act, leading to unequal access across various factors such as location, economic category, social group, and gender.

But with the adoption of the Constitution and with the progressive legislations making their way into Indian society, the government has undertaken successive efforts to put an end to this exclusion trend and make it more and more inclusive.

In this section, the exclusive practices of the Indian system of primary education which defeat the purpose of universalization of education are under discussion. An earnest attempt is also made to delve into the dynamics that contribute to such exclusion and bring inequity in access to educational opportunities and the steps undertaken through protective and promotive policies to overcome them and to provide an inclusive and universal character to primary education.

According to data from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF,2016), over six million children in India missed school in 2015-2016. Hindustan Times (2024) reports that 9,30,531 youngsters were found to have dropped out of elementary school. As per the data captured, at the primary school level (ages 6 to 14), Uttar Pradesh had the highest percentage of out-of-school children (3,96,655), followed by Gujarat (1,06,885), Bihar (1,34,252), Assam (80,739), Haryana (22,841), and Tamil Nadu (20,352).

Bhan and Rodrick (2012) visualize that children's participation in the educational process and access to education are significantly impacted by unequal social, economic, and power dynamics. The differences in educational achievement and access among India's various social and economic categories bear this out. According to Zaw et al. (2021), access to pre-primary education in underdeveloped countries is significantly skewed by gender, geography, and socioeconomic status.

Economic disparities contribute significantly to social exclusion in Indian primary education. Reports by World Bank (2018) and Pratham (2021) emphasize the impact of poverty on educational opportunities, with economically disadvantaged children facing barriers such as lack of resources, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient learning materials.

The use of language as a medium of instruction and cultural insensitivity in educational practices contribute to social exclusion. Studies by Biswas (2018) and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT, 2016) discuss how language barriers and a lack of inclusive curriculum perpetuate exclusion, particularly among marginalized communities.

The role of teachers in perpetuating social exclusion cannot be ignored. Research by Rukmini and Panda (2017) and the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2020) suggests that biases among teachers, both implicit and explicit, contribute to unequal treatment of students from marginalized backgrounds.

The review explores the impact of government policies and interventions aimed at addressing social exclusion in primary education. Evaluating initiatives such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Mid-Day Meal Scheme, the analysis considers their effectiveness in mitigating social disparities (MHRD, 2018).

With this backdrop, reference can be made to the works of Anitha (2000) and Dreze and Sen (1995). To these seminal researchers, educational disparities in India are indicative of social stratification, evident in variations across caste, religion, and ethnic lines. Hunt (2008) Sedwal and Kamath (2011) discuss access to elementary education among socially marginalized groups, particularly the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes and they highlight the affirmative action attached to these groups. It further reveals the social inequity that plagues Indian elementary education and discusses various strategies pursued for bridging the gaps. The nature of exclusion and discrimination faced by these groups in accessing elementary education are largely confined to the economic and cultural factors and also highlight the role of education in the enhancement of socioeconomic profile. The literacy rate increased among these groups but only remained stuck up at the quantitative data or enrolment ratio level. Physical access to school, retention, schooling environment classroom process, unequal schooling system, and cost of schooling are also major factors in accessing elementary education among these two groups. It not only points out ideological issues and reform measures attached to the elementary education system among marginalized groups but also suggests further research and policy recommendations to strengthen qualitative education among them.

Klasen (2001) applied a rights-based perspective to childhood social exclusion, utilizing Sen's capability approach to view it as the deprivation of essential capabilities necessary for societal integration. This approach is employed to analyze the interconnection between education and social exclusion, revealing that education significantly influences whether social isolation is mitigated or exacerbated. Through a capabilities-based approach, education systems are urged to shift their emphasis from average achievements to enhancing the performance of the most disadvantaged students, thereby fostering social integration.

Upendranadh (1994) from a study in Andhra Pradesh, focuses on educational wastage and non-participation at the primary level. The analysis involved retention ratios, non-participation rates, and work participation rates among children, aiming to establish connections with socio-economic factors. The findings reveal significant educational wastage, particularly high dropout and stagnation rates among girls, Harijans, and disadvantaged groups.

Bandyopadhya and Subrahmanian (2011) aim to elucidate the nature of gender disparity in achieving Universal Elementary Education in the Indian education system. Their paper addresses issues related to elementary education for both girls and boys in India, emphasizing the educational deprivation faced by girls. The state has implemented various plans and policies to address exclusion and challenges, focusing on decentralization, developing capabilities among women, ensuring access and retention, creating responsive systems, and reducing dropout rates. In the same vein, Kulgar and Kumar(2017), Marphatia, et.al(2019),Prakash,et.al.(2017) and Warner, et.al.(2012) observe that school attrition has a strong association with widening gender inequality. Duraisamy (2004); Velaskar(2005)look at the gender exclusion in Indian schools from a different perspective. To both these authors, the likelihood of a girl attending school is influenced by parental decisions and financial capabilities, with a

prevailing preference for sons over daughters in educational choices, leading to continued gender disparities despite the implementation of the RTE Act.

In its policy brief, CREATE (2009) presents an analysis of access, vulnerability, and exclusion in India's school education system based on the Country Analytic Report on Access to Basic Education in India. The brief highlights the increased demand for school education, particularly in rural areas, along with a decline in out-of-school children. However, despite these improvements, marginalized groups such as SCs, STs, and women still face challenges in accessing quality education compared to more privileged sections of society. The factors contributing to this disparity include the location of schools, socio-economic conditions, gender discrimination, being first-generation learners, illness, and inadequate facilities. Additionally, the policy brief underscores existing gaps in policies and research aimed at enhancing educational access in India.

Jenkins (2009) voices the exclusion and disadvantages of children of underprivileged groups in school education. Particularly, children belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), being female, facing destitution, and residing in impoverished or remote areas are the excluded ones in the system of education. Research indicates that Hindu-SC, Hindu-ST, and Muslim communities notably trail behind higher-caste Hindus in terms of educational participation and achievement. It is shown in studies by Desai and Kulkarni (2008) and Basant (2012). According to Bhalotra and Zamora (2010), Muslim parents exhibit lower ambition regarding their children's education. Numerous studies, including those by Drèze (2003), Subrahmanian and Balagopalan (2003), Ramachandran (2004), Subramanyam and Sekhar (2010), Veerbhadranaika et al. (2012), and Bhatla (2017), highlight widespread socio-religious exclusions in access to education in India.

The Planning Commission (2011) estimates that approximately 19 percent of children aged 6-17 in India are still not attending school. The most disadvantaged children often experience various forms of exclusion, such as belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), being female, facing destitution, residing in impoverished or remote areas, etc. Socio-cultural factors, including caste and religion, can act as barriers to a child's access to education (Mishra 2014).

Bhatty, et.al. (2014) report that despite governmental efforts, a considerable number of children remain highly susceptible to being excluded from the education system. These children encounter various obstacles that either prevent them from attending school or if they manage to enroll, hinder their ability to continue their education, leading to dropouts. Importantly, there is a strong correlation between socioeconomic status and educational access, resulting in significantly elevated levels of exclusion from education for children belonging to marginalized groups. The education system is particularly exclusionary for five major groups of children—girls, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and those with disabilities. Further, the author also mentions that limited information is available regarding educational access and achievement for children in highly vulnerable groups. However, existing evidence indicates that these groups constitute a significant portion of the child population in India, particularly among those who are illiterate and out of school. The references are made to (a) street children; (b) those without adult care and protection; (c) children in conflict with the law; (d) child workers; (e) children with parents engaged in stigmatized occupations such as sex work, waste picking, and manual scavenging, as well as children involved in these occupations; (f) HIV-positive children and children of HIV-positive parents; (g) migrant children; (h) children from de-notified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic tribes, particularly vulnerable tribal groups; and (i) children living in conflict-affected areas.

Govinda and Bandopadhhya(2019) look into the religion-based exclusion in education in India. They quote the SRI (2005) survey reported that the estimated percentages of out-of-school children are highest among Muslims at 9.97%; the situation is even more pronounced for Muslims in rural areas at 12.03%, the highest percentage among all social groups. Similarly,

According to Bhalotra and Zamora (2010), parents belonging to the Muslim community exhibit lower levels of ambition concerning their children's education.

Govinda and Bandopaddhya (2010) look into the exclusion of children from the school system from a religious angle. They quote the 2005 SRI survey which indicated that the prevalence of out-of-school children is most significant among the Muslim population, reaching 9.97%. This disparity is more pronounced in rural areas where the figure rises to 12.03%, marking the highest percentage compared to other social groups.

Kurian(2015) identifies that marginalization and discrimination keep children away from the school system. Out of the over six million children currently not attending school in India, 75% belong to marginalized groups, with Dalits comprising 32.4%, Muslims 25.7%, and Adivasis 16.6%. Gender-based social exclusion remains a major concern in Indian primary education. Research by Sen (2015) and UNICEF (2019) reveals the prevalence of gender stereotypes, unequal resource allocation, and limited access to quality education for girls, especially in rural areas.

The SSA XIth Plan Report (2019) pronounces that concerning the school education of urban underprivileged children, it is observed that structural factors such as caste, class, poverty, unemployment, and limited access to resources significantly impact both the learning experiences and outcomes. The high opportunity cost within urban poor households not only hinders community involvement but also acts as a catalyst, discouraging children from attending school and, in some cases, leading to their withdrawal.

The study of Dipta Bhog,et.al. ,(2011), Subrahmanian & Balagopalan(2003); Subramanyam & Sekhar(2010); Veerbhadranaika, Sampath, Shivali, & Vasavi(2012) and the Sachar Committee report(2006) reveal that despite an overall enhancement in educational status, progress has been notably sluggish for Muslims.

Kumar (2006) traces social exclusion in the school system to the growing commercialisation of education. To him, given the commercialization of education, acquiring quality education becomes a challenging endeavor for underprivileged and vulnerable groups in India, especially when a significant portion of the population struggles with limited purchasing capacity. This is evident in the predicament faced by children hailing from economically deprived backgrounds, socially marginalized groups like Dalits, orphaned and abandoned children, and those in institutional care, among others. The financial constraints further exacerbate the difficulties these groups encounter in accessing educational opportunities. In the same vein, Jalan and Murgai (2008) argue that the swift economic expansion of India since the 1980s has resulted in a surge in outcome disparities, signaling a widening gap in opportunities. This has a reflection in the school system.

Reddy and Sinha (2010) explore the factors contributing to the dropout of children from schools in India. The paper contends that these children are not leaving voluntarily but are rather being "pushed out" due to factors such as poverty, child labour, school quality, education quality, disinterest in education, corporal punishment, examination failure, absence of supportive social norms, and challenges faced by first-generation learners. The paper advocates for community involvement in school

management, facilitated by initiatives from non-governmental organizations, to ensure that every child completes their elementary education.

Taneja (2020) asserts that social and educational disparities are closely intertwined. Although education is often perceived as a means of levelling the playing field, any disparity in access or quality of education has the potential to perpetuate existing social and economic inequalities. The Oxfam International report emphasizes that when schooling is segregated based on factors such as class, wealth, ethnicity, gender, or other indicators of privilege and exclusion, it solidifies and reinforces societal inequality. To her, India's education system is plagued by gross inequalities in access, completion, and quality. Class, linguistic background, gender, ethnicity, and place of birth bring differential educational experiences for children in India. Added to the determinants often discussed she adds culture, language, gender, and geography as the contributors to exclusion in education.

The private sector, by often linking the cost of schooling to its quality, has been exacerbating economic and social inequalities. This trend further undermines the support for public schooling among the more privileged, as noted by Nambissan (2012).

Children from marginalized communities, even when attending school, often face exclusion due to persistent issues in classroom practices, leading to high dropout rates (Bhatty, 2014). Negative teacher perceptions of Dalits and their caste background, coupled with the association of purity/pollution with caste identity, result in discriminatory practices affecting various aspects of school life such as peer relations, friendships, teachers' attitudes, and food cultures (Naorem, & Ramachandran 2013). This hostile school environment makes it challenging for these children to navigate, as they encounter discrimination, prejudice, and rejection from both teachers and peers. It highlights a clear pattern of inequality in the quality of education, including poor teaching and limited learning opportunities, contributing to an overall disadvantage for children from impoverished backgrounds (Salam 2004). The classroom setting, in this context, falls short of providing an equal and inclusive space for disadvantaged children. Salam (2004) observes that children from impoverished backgrounds face ongoing discrimination, prejudice, and rejection from both teachers and peers, highlighting the existence of a financially disadvantaged environment and a persistent pattern of inequality in the educational experiences of economically disadvantaged children. Such situations push them into school alienation. Singh and Sinha (2018) assert that it is vividly clear that a sizable portion of out-of-school youth are members of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, Muslims, girls, and youngsters who are considered vulnerable.

However, it needs to be mentioned here that global efforts to ensure every child's right to education have propelled the Government of India to revisit its universalization of primary education mission (Mehendale and Mukhopadhyay 2018; Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani 2018;). India's vision of universalization of education is ingrained in the Constitution itself. The Constitution of India, through the Preamble and various articles such as Article 41 and Article 45, emphasizes the right to equality, education, and public assistance, including provisions for children suffering from exclusion and marginalization. The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, of 2002, established elementary education as a Fundamental Right for children aged 6-14, mandating that the State must provide free and compulsory education as determined by law. This landmark legislation in India has united governments, community organizations, and civil society in a collective effort to achieve universal elementary education (MSPI, 2011). The government has designed policies to ensure equal access and opportunity for every child from the age of six to fourteen. But this policy has resulted in a discriminatory, class-segregated, and increasingly privatized schooling environment (Choudhury 2020; Mousumi and Kusakabe 2019). Further, critiques comment that though India claims the RTE as a milestone in the policy planning to ensure inclusive education, still it suffers from some lacunae.

One of the major aspects relating to the slow implementation of the RTE, in 2009 relates to the degree of awareness among the stakeholders. The teachers are one of the most significant stakeholders who are expected to carry forward the successful implementation of the RTE,2009. In this context, Gadam (2013), Gandhi & Yadav (2013), Sudha & Mohmmad (2014), Asha & Shiva Swamy (2013), Thote, Mathew & Rathore (2013) have given their observations that the degree of awareness among teachers is not yet the same relating to the RTE,2009 and its expectations. It varies based on region, spatial location, gender differentiation, experience, and educational qualification of the teachers. To these authors, teachers in the metropolis, central areas, and urban areas are better aware than the teachers of the satellites, or peripheries, of rural areas. Similarly, male teachers show a higher level of awareness than female teachers. The teachers with long years of teaching experience and higher educational qualifications seem more knowledgeable about the prescriptions of the RTE than the newly joining and least educational background teachers. This disparity in the knowledge level contributes to the slow progress of the implementation of the RTE Act, of 2009.

Duggal (2016) discovered that teachers possessed limited knowledge about the RTE Act. Additionally, 25% of students from economically weaker sections (EWS) expressed concerns about experiencing segregation in schools.

The studies of Barman (2015), Baral & Meher (2017), Chaturvedi & Kuldeep (2015), Malakar & Mahato (2014), Ojha (2013), Rahman (2013), Rao(2015), Seema(2013), Senapati,(2018)Singh (2016), Singh (2017), Sony (2013), Upadhyaya and Senapati(2016)indicate that the implementation of the RTE Act in the country has witnessed a very poor performance and progress. It is substantiated by the teacher deficit, knowledge gap, lack of infrastructure and support systems in the schools to implement the Act in letter and spirit. These factors have defeated the very purpose of the Act. To date, dropout has not fully been arrested and universalization is yet to be attained.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the meta-analysis of the articles made in this section establishes that exclusion studies about schools are in flood in India. These exclusions signalize the school system as a vital life resource and exclusion from this institution as a marker of the deep-rooted cultural and structural stratification system in Indian society. A plethora of seventy-five articles is analysed in this section. They are basketed into different sections like overlapping social and cultural traditions and school exclusion, statistical database on school exclusion on different periods for different groups of children, language, and teacher-induced school exclusion, gender dimensions of school exclusion, caste, and socio-religious affiliation induced school exclusion, the impact of exclusion on child's rights and capabilities, progressive Government interventions to end social exclusion in Indian schools and studies on the shortfalls of the policies.

The thematic analysis made in this section with the articles under review is presented in Graph No. 1.4.
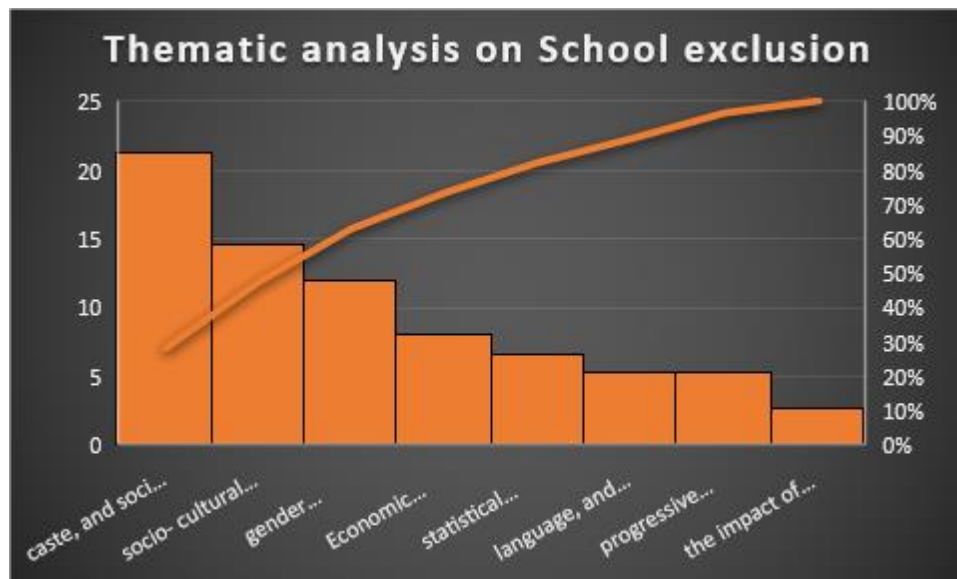
Graph No. 1.4.: Thematic analysis on school exclusion

Thus, the aforesaid graph projects that school exclusion is a chronic feature in India stemming from the distant past. Socio-cultural factors coupled with economic disadvantages deprive a child of school education. Many times, teachers' attitudes towards children from marginalized backgrounds, and language barriers also contribute significantly to school exclusion. Among the reviewed articles, highest number of articles emphasize the role of caste and other socio-cultural factors like religious affiliation play a major role in generating school exclusion in Indian society. Similarly, a good number of articles authenticate the role of existing gender practices depriving girls of school education. It is followed by the economic impoverishment factor becoming a cause of school exclusion. Very few studies speak of the existing attitude of teachers towards marginalised children and language barrier generating school exclusion in the country though it is a reality. The impact of school exclusion is very high on child rights and capability formation which ultimately has repercussions on national growth and development. Though few studies reflect on databases on school exclusion in the country, they agree that many times these data underrepresent school education. So, they recommend generating socio-cultural segregated data for better policy target fixing. Articles flood on progressive policies of the government for ending school exclusion and a good number of articles make a critical analysis of the reasons for their slow implementation. However, it needs to be mentioned from the meta-analysis that all the articles univocally conclude exclusion in school education is still a continuing phenomenon in India which needs a strong fight.

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