



EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF SCHEDULE CAST COMMUNITY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NARAYANPUR BLOCK IN LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT OF ASSAM

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Abstract: The study is conducted on educational status of Schedule Cast Community with special reference to Narayanpur Block in Lakhimpur District, Assam. The objective of the study is to find out the present educational status of the SC community and identify the educational problems faced by them in accessing and completing the education. For this study, the investigator used survey method under descriptive research. The data needed for the study has been collected with the help of a self designed questionnaire. There are 270 Schedule Caste households of two selected villages. Out of these households, 40 households are taken as a sample of the study by using random sampling techniques. The study found several challenges have faced by the SC students in accessing quality education such as poverty, parents' illiteracy, poor socio-economic background, poor communication etc.

Key Words: Educational Status, Schedule Caste, Community, Households, Education etc.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a systematic process through which a child or an adult acquires knowledge, experience, skills, and sound attitude. It makes an individual civilized, refined, cultured and educated. For a civilized and socialized society, education is the only means. Its goal is to make an individual perfect. Every society gives importance to education because it is a panacea for all evils; it is the key to solve the various problems of life. (Deka, N., Pp-10) Educating people is helping them to become more aware of themselves and the world they live in, as well as making informed choices which are good for both individuals and society. Right that Education is considered as a basic human empowers individuals to participate in society and enhances their opportunities for personal and professional development.

To define a caste is a hard task, but Risely defines "Caste as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same hereditary and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community" (Indian social system by Mukhi H.R., Pp-36)

The Scheduled Castes is formerly known as the Untouchables, are a group of people who have been historically discriminated against and continue to face various forms of social and economic marginalization. To redress this history of discrimination and to ensure the social inclusion of Scheduled Castes, India's Constitution lays down policies for Affirmative Measures including reservations in educational establishments and government employment. But despite this policy, the education status of the SC community continues to be a concern. The number of SC students enrolled in schools and colleges

has increased, but high rates of dropping out continue to be a problem as well as the quality of their training is often inadequate. Consequently, the number of SC students in higher education and professional workforce is significantly lower than for any other community. The overall development of the country is also hampered by lack of access to quality education, which has a detrimental effect not only on individual members of the SC community but also on their prospects. The education sector has a key role to play in social mobility, economic growth and can have broad consequences for the country's development if there is an unequal distribution of it. In recent years, the education status of Scheduled Castes in India has made a substantial improvement but remains very far behind other communities.

As per 2011 census, the total population of Assam was 3, 12,05,576. The population of Scheduled Castes in Assam was 22, 31,321, representing 7.15% of the total population of the state. According to the 2011 census, there was a literacy rate of 66.76% for SCs against that of the overall population of Assam which stands at 72.19%. In the SC population, the female literacy rate is 44.48%, while the overall male literacy rate is 55.52%.

A number of initiatives to improve the educational status of Scheduled Castes in Assam have been taken by the state government. In order to help them pursue their higher studies, financial aid will be made available for SC students between XI and Ph.D. under the Post Metric scholarship scheme. The state government also provides books free of charge to pupils aged up to Class XII. Despite these efforts, Assam is still facing difficulties in ensuring that SC communities have access to quality education. In many cases, the obstacles to educational opportunities are still poverty, lack of infrastructure and discrimination. Therefore, it is necessary to continue working towards improving the educational situation of the SC community in Assam.

An overall overview of existing research is provided in the literature review. The review has highlighted the main findings, identified any deficiencies in research and suggested ways forward. In conclusion, a literature review has enhanced our understanding of the topic and laid the foundations for further investigation.

Reddy and Patil, 2018 conducted a study on Educational status of the Scheduled Caste population in rural areas of Karnataka, India. As a sample 400 SC households were taken from four villages. The study indicates that the educational situation of SC households is significantly different from others belonging to another caste group. The study highlighted that the low educational attainment of SC households was a result of various social, cultural, and economic factors, including poverty, lack of educational infrastructure, and discrimination.

Karthick and Sivakumar 2019 focuses on Status of Scheduled Castes in the state of Tamil Nadu. In two districts of Tamil Nadu, the study has examined 200 households belonging to Scheduled Castes. In order to obtain information on the educational situation of the SC, the study has been conducted using two types of methodologies: Quantitative as well as Qualitative. The study showed that in Tamil Nadu, with a large number of children having left school before the completion of their primary education, the schooling status of the SC is very low.

Balaji and Kumar 2019 conducted a study on the educational status of the scheduled Caste community of Uttar Pradesh. As a sample of 100 Scheduled Caste households were from two district of Uttar Pradesh. For the study, a questionnaire was used for collection of data. The study found that the educational status of the scheduled caste community in Uttar Pradesh is low, with a significant number of children dropping out of school before completing their primary education. The study also found that discrimination and lack of support from the government were major factors contributing to the low educational status of the community.

1.1: Significance of the study

Not only are the individual prospects of the SC community but also the overall progress of the country affected by the lack of access to quality education. The education sector plays a vital role in promoting social mobility and economic growth; with any inequality of distribution potentially having far reaching consequences for the country's development. The lack of access to quality education not only affects the individual prospects of the SC community but also obstruct the overall progress of the country. Education is a most relevant tool for social mobility and economic growth, and any inequities in its distribution can have far-reaching consequences for the development of the country. Therefore, it is

essential to understand the factors that contribute to the low educational attainment of the SC community and to identify strategies that can promote their educational advancement. The significance of this study is that firstly, it will contribute knowledge on the educational status of SC communities. Secondly, it will provide insights into the challenges faced by the SC community in accessing and completing education and help identify areas for intervention. Thirdly, this study will help in understanding the impact of government policies and initiatives on the educational status of SC communities and their effectiveness in accessing quality education. Finally, the recommendations made in the study will be useful for improving the educational status of the SC community as well as for their social and economic development. By examining the issues and challenges faced by the SC community in accessing and completing education, this study will provide useful insights for policy makers and stakeholders to access quality education and empower them for a better future.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follow –

- i) To find out the present educational status of the SC community.
- ii) To identify the problems faced by the SC community in accessing and completing the education.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study is limited to the educational status of the Scheduled Caste community in Aunibori and Shilikhaguri village of Narayanpur Block of Lakhimpur district. For this study, the investigator used survey method under descriptive research. The data needed for the study has been collected with the help of a self designed questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed through tabulation and percentage only.

3.1 Population and Sample of the Study

Population refers to the entire group or collection of individuals, objects, or events that researchers are interested in studying. A sample, on the other hand, is a subset or a smaller representation of the population. The Population of the study is the entire scheduled caste community residing in Shilikhaguri and Aunibori Village. There are 270 Schedule Caste households in these two villages. Out of these households, 40 households are taken from two selected village as a sample of the study by using random sampling techniques.

3.2 Sources of Data

The research work is mainly based on both primary and secondary sources of data collected from related sources. The primary data are collected from the field survey of selected sample villages by using the tool which is constructed by the researcher. The secondary data are collected from different books, journals and website.

3.3 Limitation of the Study

- The study is limited to Aunibori and Shilikhaguri village of Narayanpur Block.
- The study also limited in the SC community of these two villages.
- The study also limited in educational status of the SC community.
- The study is limited to explore only the challenges of perusing education of SC community.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Objective 1: The first objective is “To find out the present educational status of the SC community”. In order to met the objectives the required data are taken from 40 households in Aunibori and Shilikhaguri villages with the help of self made questionnaire. The collected data are tabulated and analyzed as follows-

Table 4.1 Current Educational Status of SC Community in Sample Villages

Educational qualifications	Total	Percentage
Below HSLC	49	40.84%
HSLC Pass	27	22.50%
HS Pass	24	18.33%
Graduate	15	12.5%
Masters	02	1.6%
Professional	03	2.5%
Total	120	100%

Source: Field Study

Interpretation: From the above table shows that current educational status of SC Community. It is observed that 40.83% respondents between 30-60 age groups are below HSLC. 22.50% are HSLC Pass, 18.33 % are HS Pass and 12.5% is Graduate, 1.6% is Masters and rest of the 2.5% is found in professional education. Most of below HSLC members are just literate only.

Table.2: Current Educational Status of Male and Female in sample villages

Educational Qualification	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Below HSLC	22	26.5%	27	57.4%
HSLC Pass	12	14.45%	15	31.9%
HS Pass	15	18.07%	9	19.1%
Graduate	10	12.04%	5	10.6%
Masters	2	1.60%	Nil	0%
Professional	2	2.40%	1	2.1%
Total	83	100%	47	100%

Source: Field Study

Interpretation: The above table shows the educational status of males and females of Scheduled Caste community of sample villages. From the field study 26.50% of males and 57.40% of females are below HSLC. HSLC pass males and females are 14.45% and 31.9% respectively. 18.07% of males and 19.1% of females are HS passed. Again 12.04% of males and 10.6% of females are found in Graduate level. At masters level only found 1.6% of males and in professional degree 2.40% of male and 2.1% of females are found. From the study it is observed that the current educational status of females is higher than their males' counterpart in case of below HSLC and HSLC pass categories. But in case of HS and Graduate categories males are better than their females' counterpart. From this observation we can say that women are given less opportunities in accessing higher education.

Objective 2: The Second objective is “To Identify the Problems faced by the Scheduled Caste Community in Aunibori and Shilikhaguri villages in accessing and completing education”. For this purposes the researcher asked some questions to the family members. The problems face by them in accessing education are given below –

Table 3: Educational Problems of SC Community in Sample village

SL nos.	Nature of Problems	Total Respondents	Yes	No	Percentage of Positive Response	Percentage of Negative response
1	Parent's Illiteracy is a problem of accessing and completing education	40	25	15	62.5%	37.5%
2	Problem of Poverty	40	30	10	75.0%	25.0%
3	Lack of Interest	40	5	35	12.5%	87.5%
4	Lake of Guidance	40	16	24	40.0%	60.0%
5	Lack of awareness towards their rights and opportunities	40	20	20	50.0%	50.0%
6	Problems of Parents Consciousness	40	13	27	32.5%	67.5%
7	Unhealthy family environment	40	25	15	62.5%	37.5%
8	Problems of Health and nutrition	40	33	17	82.5%	42.5%
9	Problems of Communication	40	12	28	30.0%	70.0%

Source: Field Study

Interpretation: From the above table shows that out of total 40 families,

- 62.5% of the respondents said the parent's illiteracy is a big problem of their children to accessing the education and 37.5% of the respondents said haven't faced this problem
- From the above table shows that 75% of the households have problem of poverty and 25% of the households have not any problem.
- From the above table it is seen that 12.5% of the respondents reveals that lack of interest is a problem and 87.5% of the respondents ignore it.
- From the above table, it is seen that 40% of the respondents reveals their children faced the Guidance problem and another 60% of the respondents said they have proper guidance.
- From the above table it is seen that 50% of the total households faced the lack awareness of family rights and opportunities and the remaining 50% are aware of these.
- From the above table it is seen that out of total households 30% of the households have lack of parental consciousness and 70% of the households have parental consciousness.
- Another big problem of SC community is unhealthy family environment. Most of the fathers are addicted to alcohol and beverage items that creating the mental insecurity in their family environment. There are 20% households has unhealthy family environment
- From the above table it is seen that 40% of the households have health and nutrition problems and 60% have no health and nutrition problems.
- From the above table it is seen that 50% of the total households have communication problem to school and 50% have no communication deficiency.

Objective 3: To find the strategies that can be adopted to improve the educational status of SCs village of Narayanpur Block.

For improving the educational status of Scheduled Castes in sample villages of Narayanpur block can be a multi-faceted approach. Here are some strategies that can be adopted:

1. **Improving infrastructure:** One of the major reasons for low attendance and dropout rates among SC students is the lack of proper infrastructure in the schools such as sitting arrangements, playground, clean drinking water, toilets, innovative teaching aids can help improve the educational status of them.
2. **Scholarships and incentives:** Providing scholarships and incentives for SC students that can encourage them to attend the school and pursuing higher education. These include merit-based scholarships, stipends for books and uniforms, and special coaching classes for any competitive exams.
3. **Community involvement:** Community involvement may play an important role in improving the educational status of SCs. Engage the parents and community members in school activities to create a new sense of responsibility towards the education of their children.
4. **Skill development:** Along with academic education, providing vocational training and skill development programs also help the Schedule Caste students acquire skills that can improve their employability and financial status.
5. **Awareness campaigns:** Conducting awareness campaigns in the village to promote the importance of education and address social stigma and discrimination against Schedule Castes can help create a conducive environment for Schedule Caste students to pursue education
6. **Support from government schemes:** The government has launched several schemes for the welfare of SCs, such as the Pre-Metric and Post-Metric Scholarship Schemes. Availing these schemes can provide financial support to SC students and encourage them to pursue education.
7. **Teacher training:** Providing training and development programs for teachers can help them develop better teaching skills and techniques. This can lead to a better learning environment and improved academic outcomes for SC students.

4.1. Findings

The study was conducted on 40 selected households under Shilikhaguri and village. The overall findings from the data analysis are as follows –

From the table 4.1, the researcher found the following findings-

- This study found that the total percentages of below HSLC in 40 families are 40.84%.
- This study found that the total percentages of HSLC pass in 40 families of these two villages are 22.50%.
- This study found that the total percentages of HS pass in 40 families are 18.33%.
- This study found that the total percentage of Graduates and Masters are 12.5% and 1.6% respectively.
- The study found that only 2.5% are involved in professional degree.

From the table 4.2, the researcher found the following findings-

- This study found that the rate of below HSLC is 26.8% in males and 57.4% in females.
- This study found that HSLC pass rates are 14.45% for males and 31.9% are females.
- The study found that male and female literacy rate in Graduate in the sample villages are 12.04% and 10.6% respectively.
- The study found that Males and females literacy rate in Masters Level in 1.60% and 0%.
- In Professional level it is found that 2.5% in Males and 2.1% in females.

From the table 4.3, the researcher found the following findings-

- 62.5% of the respondents found the parent's illiteracy is a big problem.
- 75% of the respondents have problem of poverty.
- 12.5% of the respondents found that lack of interest is a major problem among them.

- 40% of the respondents reveal their children faced the problem of guidance. Because they go to daily wage labour and they couldn't give proper guidance.
- 50% of the total households faced the lack awareness of family rights and opportunities.
- 30% of the households have lack of parental consciousness.
- 20% of have unhealthy family environment.
- 40% of the households have health and nutrition problems
- 50% of the households have communication problem to go for school.

Socio economic condition is not so good in these studied areas. Majority of the people involves in fishing, agriculture and bonded labor.

4.2 Suggestions

The following recommendations can be made for the development of education in both the sample villages as well as the entire Scheduled Caste. These are given below—

- Encourage more employment and adoption of income generating activities.
- Awareness must be brought among parents for increased SC literacy.
- Creating awareness among Scheduled Castes about child marriage and literacy.
- Scholarships have to be arranged for SC students.
- Special arrangement should be made to provide Non-formal and Informal education to Scheduled Caste students.
- Vocational training has to be provided for Scheduled Caste students.
- Gender perspective must be integrated into all economic formation
- Parents' attitude needs to be improved through proper guidance and counseling.
- The administration of incentives has to be streamlined so that the students can get all the benefits by creating modern techniques.
- Adult education should be encouraged to motivate the parents about the value of education.
- The concerned authorities have to take appropriate steps to provide proper facilities for Scheduled Caste students.
- Proper awareness campaigns should be organized to create awareness about the importance of education in their lives.

Conclusion

Finally, the educational status of the Schedule Castes still remains to be a matter of concern. Despite affirmative action policies and constitutional provisions, the Scheduled Caste is lagging behind in achieving a high level of education. The complicated, multifaceted challenges faced by the communities of Schedule Castes need to be addressed by policymakers if we are to increase their learning outcomes. This shall include poverty reduction, improving quality of public school education and dealing with discrimination and social stigma. It is also important to involve the community in this process of training. It can improve the education levels of the Schedule Caste population through cooperation between policymakers, educators and society with a view to creating more equal societies. The findings of the study reveal that in both villages there are a number of significant factors which affect the education status of Schedule Castes. In comparison with the general population of these villages, the degree of educational qualification of members of the Schedule Caste is lower. A number of factors such as socio-economic obstacles, lack of access to high quality education and existing discrimination in the system have been identified as reasons for this difference. Some suggestions for this purpose have been mentioned earlier and it has also been stated that in order to educate their children, the attitude of parents has to be changed, society, government all have to keep making efforts.

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