

Research Article

Caste, Gender and Schools: Patterns of Exclusion on Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT

Literacy is an essential tool of self-defence in a society where social interactions include the written media and basic education is also a catalyst of social change. It is both indicator and an instrument of development, also the most important determinants of economic growth. Education is instrumental in raising earning and reducing poverty as it increases economic output and raises productivity levels. Despite significant efforts by Government, education remains non-accessed to the vast section of society particularly those belonging to marginalised group (scheduled caste and scheduled tribe). Situation is further compounded by the rapid growth of population and increasing divergence in social conditions. This study reflects systematic exclusion of children in name of Caste and Gender from schools in villages of Bikaner district of Rajasthan, which is ultimately reflected in gross and net enrolment rate and gender parity index of schools. Study through primary survey finds how inequalities among social groups in terms of access to education results in indifference to schools and education leading to their exclusion.

Keywords: Education, Caste, Gender, Enrolment, Exclusion, Villages, Schools.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the basic requirement and the fundamental right of the citizens of a nation. Today, the world is going through rapid changes in all dimensions of development. In this era of rapid social transformation and technological revolution, the role of education in developing knowledge economy has been demonstrated in rapidly globalising world (World Bank, 1997). In the present era, education determines the levels of well being and prosperity of the people. It is

one of the key inputs for economic growth and human development. Any economy, whether developing or developed, can flourish only when human resources have been developed to the fullest. The Indian National Education Policy recommended that education should be made available to people of all children, caste and the community without any segregation as basic education is the key to the economic development of any country (Tilak, 1994). During 2001 to 2011, the literacy rate of Rajasthan improved from 61.03% to 67.06% with male literacy improving from 76.46% to 80.51% and female literacy from 44.34% to 52.66% in literacy. These numbers make Rajasthan among the best performers on this count during the decade. Despite being under substantial progress in literacy and education, in Rajasthan there are various factors which continuously act as stumbling block in expansion of education facilities.

OBJECTIVE

Main objective of this study is to identify exclusion taking place in the name of caste and gender in schools of Bikaner district in Rajasthan. This process of exclusion is measured by the gender parity index, gross and net enrolment rate of different caste group in schools of selected villages of Bikaner district in Rajasthan. In order to achieve these objectives sample survey has been conducted in these villages of Bikaner district.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology refers to the research technique which is going to be used in a particular study. Major research design in social science research includes both quantitative analysis and qualitative methods. The nature of the research problem also determines methodology to be used. Quantitative approach is used for this article because study is of empirical nature and primary data has been generated through survey in seven villages of Bikaner district in Rajasthan. For this study, following formula has been used to calculate various indicators.

$$(1) \text{ Gender Parity Index (GPI)} = \frac{\text{Girl's enrolment in primary Grades in year 't'}}{\text{Boy's enrolment in primary Grades in year 't'}} \times 100$$

$$(2) \text{ Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)} = \frac{\text{Total enrolment in Grades I-V}}{\text{Population of age 6-11 years}} \times 100$$

$$(3) \text{ Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)} = \frac{\text{Enrolment, Grades I-V/6-11 age group}}{\text{Population of age 6-11 years}} \times 100$$

Table 1: Socio-economic background of villages

Village	Total household	Surveyed household (10%)	Total Population			Age Composition			
			Male	Female	Sex ratio	<6	6-14	14-18	>18
Napasar	2825	283	755	695	920	17.1	24.4	16.2	42.3
Charnawal	769	77	191	175	916	16	21	19	44
Chakso	48	5	15	13	867	13.2	17.4	12.3	57.1
Akhoosar	129	13	35	31	886	15	16.6	19.9	48.5
Sadolai	187	19	49	45	918	15.1	18.6	20.8	45.5
Panchoo	1570	157	433	398	919	16	20.5	21.4	42.1
Udairamsar	1070	107	298	274	920	17	21.3	22.4	39.3
	6598	661							

Source: field survey.

Table 1 depicts the total population and age composition of surveyed household in Selected villages of Bikaner district in Rajasthan; Table 1 reflects that highest and lowest proportion of less than 6 years population were present in Napasar and Chakso village and the percentage of population gradually increases on moving towards the higher age group; this proportion increased more among villages located near district headquarter as compared to villages located in interior of district. Same trend is witnessed among the sex ratio of villages, with more favourable sex ratio among villages located near to district headquarter as compared to villages located away from district headquarter.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender Parity Enrolment Rate among Villages of Bikaner District

The gender parity index (GPI) is a socioeconomic index usually designed to measure the relative access of education to males and females. In its simplest form, it is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education. It plays an important role in highlighting gap between boys and girls towards access and participation in education. Therefore, it influences Governments to increase its efforts to close the gap and to achieve gender equality in education.

National Family Health Survey II data found that women's educational attainment varies widely by caste and tribe. While 44% women of general category were illiterate, 7% of scheduled caste women and 79% of scheduled tribe women were reported as illiterate. Scheduled tribe women followed by scheduled caste women

Table 2: Gender parity index at elementary level

Village	Caste	Enrolled Children		GPI
		Boys	Girls	
Napasar	SC	45	38	0.84
	OBC	55	50	0.91
	GEN	69	65	0.94
	Total	169	153	0.91
Charnawal	SC	31	26	0.84
	ST	22	17	0.77
	OBC	36	32	0.89
	GEN	48	41	0.90
	Total	137	116	0.85
Chakso	SC	15	11	0.73
	OBC	26	21	0.81
	GEN	38	32	0.84
	Total	79	64	0.81
Akhoosar	SC	16	11	0.69
	OBC	27	21	0.78
	GEN	39	32	0.82
	Total	82	64	0.78
Sadolai	SC	17	12	0.71
	OBC	25	22	0.88
	GEN	39	37	0.95
	Total	81	71	0.88
Panchoo	SC	26	22	0.85
	OBC	37	33	0.89
	GEN	48	43	0.90
	Total	111	98	0.88
Udairamsar	SC	28	22	0.79
	OBC	36	32	0.89
	GEN	48	45	0.94
	Total	112	99	0.88
Combined	SC	178	142	0.80
	ST	22	17	0.77
	OBC	242	211	0.87
	GEN	329	295	0.90

Source: field survey.

are less likely than other women to have completed primary or middle level (NFHS II 98–99). Gender also influences education especially for girls because girls have less personal mobility than boys to travel outside their village to attend schools. Secondly, the burden of economic constraints falls more heavily on the girl child as they have to look after their siblings as well as work for domestic chores due to prevailing social and cultural traditions. High opportunity cost of girls' schooling and discrimination inside the school directly affects educational attainment (Joshi, 1999). Study by Rosenzweig and Schultz (1982) highlights that the consideration of son preference and the segregated role of sons and daughters in family rituals are major factors leading to discrimination against a female child. Economists suggest that the economic factors such as benefits from children and the differential market returns to the educational investments of boys and girls may be important reasons for the observed gender inequity in educational investment. Caste and geography plays an important role in child's access to education and there is common notion prevailing in these surveyed villages that a girl should be married, and studying is the waste of money and resources, and there is no need for girls to study beyond a certain level as a result girls study only up to class 7th or 8th, because after class 8th they have to go to the school in the adjoining village. The financial burden has a particularly harmful effect on the schooling of children particularly girls because regular school attendance requires a great deal of effort on the part of parents as well as children, many feel that the benefits of a girl's education will be enjoyed by others, since a daughter leaves her family after marriage. Even small amount proves a major financial burden for poor families with several children of school-going age, i.e., education turning too expensive for them. Table 2 reflects caste wise gender parity in enrolment among the surveyed school of Bikaner district and it is clear from this table that gender parity in enrolment, i.e., number of girls enrolled per 100 boys, decreases on moving from general category girls to scheduled tribe girls in all villages. This shows that girls from disadvantaged section of society are enrolled less in number as compared to girls of other category, which may be due to numerous socio-economic factors operating in the society. Highest gender parity in enrolment in general and other backward category is in Napasar village, highest gender parity in enrolment in scheduled caste and scheduled tribe category is in Panchoo and Charnawal village. Therefore, combined data of sample villages reveals that Gender parity improves on moving from scheduled caste and scheduled tribe boys and girls to general category boys and girls, which reflects less access of children of marginalised section of society towards their participation to schooling.

Gross Enrolment Rate among Villages of Bikaner District

Enrolment is the key indicator of the extent to which a particular education system

manages to provide all children with schooling facility. However, one major characteristic feature in the enrolment of children is the striking inequalities among social groups by caste, gender and region. The disparities between these social groups start with access to the primary school. Although the general trend of enrolment decreases as one moves to elementary stages, the decline in enrolment among children from lower social groups are indeed alarming.

At the upper primary stage. Caste plays an important role in influencing the education attainment of individual, children belonging to scheduled caste or scheduled tribes have low education attainment due to high dropout because of host of factors such as poverty, old age practice of untouchability (Bhaskara and Kulkarni, 1999). A study by Hutton (1931) highlights that History is replete with examples showing hostile social attitude towards the education of lower castes. For example, Hutton notes that in one case 'the depressed classes at Surat had to withdraw their children from the school as a result of indirect pressure exerted on them by higher castes. Study by Vasavi and Mehandal (2003) reveals that several households of tribal families, such as the Korku and Bhil in the villages in Madhya Pradesh, noted that they did not know when and how to enrol their children and were not aware of the incentive schemes that were provided for their children hence the students would not attend schools. Similarly, families consisting of marginalize groups such as the Kalbelia (snake charmers) and the newly migrant Bengali families in the slums in Jaipur were not aware of the functioning of the school in the vicinity of their homes. While they remained unaware of the functioning of schools and their right to enrol their children, little or no attempts were made by the teachers and the local elected representatives to inform them. Such conditions highlight not an indifference to schools and education, but the long-term effect of the exclusion from formal education that such families and households have experienced. It was conditions and factors such as these that accounted for the fact that most (58%) of the out-of-school children in the villages studied in Madhya Pradesh and in the areas in Jaipur, Rajasthan, 42% were never enrolled. Again, among those who have been enrolled but had not attended school, the percentage was the highest (21%) in the village in Madhya Pradesh. Study also points that, assessed largely in terms of numbers, percentages and proportions, out-of-school children are typically seen as reflecting the persistence of poverty and child labour. The large and significant body of out-of-schools children reflects not only the failure of the state and the education system to ensure universal access to elementary education but also the persistence of range of social disadvantages which combine to deprive children the opportunity to be educated. Chanana (1996) observed the fact that the parents spent less on girl students than boys in government as well as private schools. From Table 3, it is evident that

Table 3: Gross enrolment rate (GER) at primary and upper level

Village	Caste	GER At Primary Level		GER At Upper Primary Level	
		GER Boys	GER Girls	GER Boys	GER Girls
Napasar	SC	99.5	94.2	60.3	56.7
	OBC	117.2	103.4	64.8	60.4
	GEN	126.8	109.9	68.7	62.3
	Total	114.5	102.5	64.6	59.8
Charnawal	SC	98.4	93.5	59.2	55.8
	ST	88.7	80.3	55.4	53.7
	OBC	115.6	102.7	63.5	59.3
	GEN	125.4	107.8	67.3	61.2
	Total	107.03	96.08	61.35	57.5
Chakso	SC	97.5	92.7	58.4	54.2
	OBC	114.8	101.3	62.3	58.1
	GEN	124.3	106.6	66.2	60.7
	Total	112.2	100.2	62.3	57.67
Akhoosar	SC	96.7	90.2	57.7	53.6
	OBC	113.7	101.8	61.4	57.2
	GEN	123.4	105.2	65.3	59.6
	Total	111.27	99.07	61.47	56.8
Sadolai	SC	97.3	91.4	58.8	54.9
	OBC	115.7	103.2	63.2	59.4
	GEN	124.6	106.4	66.7	60.9
	Total	112.53	100.33	62.9	58.4
Panchoo	SC	99.8	93.2	60.8	56.8
	OBC	118.3	104.7	66.8	60.7
	GEN	126.4	108.9	68.3	62.7
	Total	114.83	102.27	65.30	60.07
Udairamsar	SC	101.4	94.6	62.4	58.6
	OBC	119.9	105.8	68.7	62.4
	GEN	127.8	109.7	70.2	64.6
	Total	116.37	103.37	67.10	61.87
Combined	SC	98.66	92.83	59.66	55.8
	ST	88.7	80.3	55.4	53.7
	OBC	116.46	103.27	64.39	59.64
	GEN	125.53	107.79	67.53	61.71

Source: field survey.

variation exists in gross enrolment rate of boys and girls belonging to different caste groups. On analysing gross enrolment of boys and girls belonging to different social groups enrolled in surveyed school and also from data of combined sample village's, it is evident that gross enrolment of boys and girls decreases on moving from boys and girls of general category to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe across all villages and this decrease is more among girls of latter category, this shows dismal picture of enrolment among members of the marginalised section of society. Our result also shows that there is more enrolment among schools of village located near to district headquarters as compared to schools of villages located in interior of district.

Net Enrolment Rate among Villages of Bikaner District

Net enrolment rate helps in assessing current status of education. Aggarwal and Shibou (1994) in their study point out that many norm-based incentives promoting education among the scheduled castes and tribes have been put into place by the Central and State Governments such as the provision of a primary school in every habitation with 200 and above for Scheduled Castes as against 300 and above for non Scheduled Caste populated habitations. Under the aegis of Operation Blackboard, special relaxations have been given to encourage scheduled caste/scheduled tribe teacher in scheduled caste/scheduled tribe habitation and the states have been advised to give higher priority to the selection of blocks which have a high concentration of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes with the construction of school buildings. In addition to reservation of seats, relaxation in age had given to for children belonging to this group of the population. All these could possibly be leading to positive association between school attendance and the caste and tribal factors. Study by Jaichandra (2003) reveals that a positive association emerges between women's labour-force participation and children's school attendance. The gender bias in school attendance declines with school accessibility and parental education rises with household size. Study by Dreze and Sen (2003) revealed that the poor functioning of Indian schooling system is one reason for persistence of endemic female illiteracy. A common response of parents to the poor functioning of a school is to send their sons to study in other villages. But the same response is far less common in the rural areas in the case of girls because parents are often reluctant to allow their daughters to wander outside village. Even if the local schooling standard is good, school enrolment and attendance for girls are always lower than boys for low parental motivation. Fear of discrimination in schools on caste and ethnic basis lead many communities not to send their children to schools instead they prefer to send them to fields for agricultural work (Velaskar, 1999). According to (Mukhopadhyay and Ghosh, 2002) poor accessibility to primary schools and high incidence of child labour have been demonstrated as two factors

Table 4: Net enrolment rate (NER) at primary and upper primary level

Village	Caste	NER at Primary Level		NER at Upper Primary Level	
		NER Boys	NER Girls	NER Boys	NER Girls
Napasar	SC	82.2	79.3	37.6	31.8
	OBC	87.4	83.7	42.4	37.2
	GEN	94.3	89.1	45.3	41.1
	Total	87.97	84.03	41.77	36.7
Charnawal	SC	81.7	78.3	36.2	30.8
	ST	74.6	70.4	33.9	29.7
	OBC	85.2	80.4	41.6	36.4
	GEN	92.7	87.4	44.5	40.2
	Total	83.55	79.125	39.05	34.275
Chakso	SC	80.4	77.6	35.4	29.7
	OBC	84.3	79.1	40.4	35.3
	GEN	91.6	86.3	43.4	39.1
	Total	85.43	81	39.73	34.7
Akhoosar	SC	79.2	76.3	34.2	28.6
	OBC	83.2	78.4	39.2	34.2
	GEN	90.4	85.2	42.3	38.3
	Total	84.27	79.97	38.57	33.7
Sadolai	SC	80.7	77.6	35.7	29.4
	OBC	85.3	80.2	41.3	36.7
	GEN	91.6	86.7	44.5	40.2
	Total	85.87	81.5	40.5	35.43
Panchoo	SC	82.6	79.3	37.3	31.1
	OBC	88.4	81.6	43.4	38.9
	GEN	93.7	88.3	46.7	42.6
	Total	88.23	83.07	42.47	37.53
Udairamsar	SC	83.7	79.7	38.1	32.5
	OBC	89.2	82.7	44.7	39.7
	GEN	95.6	89.8	48.2	43.9
	Total	89.5	84.07	43.67	38.7
Combined	SC	69.73	66.97	31.01	25.98
	ST	64.2	58.7	27.4	21.8
	OBC	84.54	78.29	41.86	36.91
	GEN	89.90	81.30	49.80	42.52

Source: field survey.

responsible particularly for the very poor quality of tribal literacy. Chattopadhyay *et al.* (2005) in their study found that the chance of going to school is less among the scheduled tribe, scheduled caste as well as other backward caste children of 6–10 years against the general caste with varying intensity across states. Table 4 reflects net enrolment rate of boys and girls among surveyed schools of Bikaner district and it is clear from Table 4 that the net enrolment rate of boys and girls decreases on moving from primary to upper primary level among all caste groups in all villages, but this decrease is more among the boys and belonging to disadvantaged section of society; this reflects striking inequalities among social groups in terms of access to education which results in indifference to schools and education and ultimately their long-term exclusion.

CONCLUSION

Education plays an important role in ameliorating poverty, inequality and other related problems. Social, cultural and economic condition pose major constraints towards access to schooling more among people belonging to marginalised section of society in general and female in particular. It is evident from the earlier discussion that their exist variations in the enrolment rate at the elementary level, among gender and social groups in surveyed villages. Our results of school enrolment show that boys and girls belonging to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and backward class groups have lower levels of achievement. The result also shows that gross and net enrolment increases on moving from boys and girls of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe to general category boys and girls. It is also evident that gender parity in enrolment among various caste groups improves on moving from scheduled caste and scheduled tribe to general category group. Along with quality of education, the problems of access, inadequate teachers, inadequate infrastructure (dilapidated classrooms, lack of sanitation facilities and even drinking water), inadequate teaching-learning hours, poor social environment, hostility and lack of empathy towards children should be addressed urgently by encouraging community and parental participation. As these factors coupled with other social circumstances detract students from the learning taking place in a school or classroom environment and are responsible for student disillusionment, low retention and alarmingly high dropout rates of children's in schools causing serious social consequences which could lead to social upheaval.

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