

An Analysis on the Educational Awareness of Marginalized Communities of Nayagram Block, Jhargram District, West Bengal

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Abstract

It is no secret that a good education has the power to change a life. What is new is the demand for that change. Governments are investing more than ever before on educating their citizens, eager for them to contribute to the national development. Education is the backbone of a society. Awareness on education is an important factor for literacy rate. Socially and economically marginalised communities are also lagging behind in education throughout the country. The present exploration studies the level of awareness based on gender, age, and literacy status. This study evokes a significant difference in educational awareness among literate and semi-literate persons, residing in Nayagram Block, Jhargram District of West Bengal.

Keywords: Marginalized communities, Educational Awareness, Gender, Age, Literacy.

Introduction

According to the World Bank, in every country, certain groups confront barriers that prevent them from fully participating in their nation's political, economic, education and social life. These groups may be excluded not only through legal systems, land and labor markets, but also through attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions. Disadvantage is often based on social identity, which may be derived from gender, age, location, occupation, race, caste, ethnicity, religion, citizenship status, disability, and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), among other factors. There is a moral imperative to address social exclusion. In India, Caste system has occupied a predominant factor of exclusion in the society. Eventually, people belonging to such groups experience hurdles of social recognition and lacks proper orientation on the upliftment of themselves. This exclusion of disadvantaged groups, if left unaddressed can lead to a very costly affair. Marginalization of a section of society occurs when individual or group of people are segregated or deprived socially, economically, psychologically and educationally. Prevention from full participation in social activities may cause social exclusion. One of the important social behaviors is to get access to education. There are several factors behind the educational backwardness of some pockets in West Bengal. Awareness about education system, facilities, impact, necessity and importance act as an internal motivation for parents and children for schooling. Enrollment ratio, drop out rates, literacy rate, female literacy rate, gender gap in literacy are important factors to determine educational status of an area. According to The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Govt. Of India (2016), Nayagram Community Development Block is one of the 87 Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs) of West Bengal. Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and Other Backward Caste are considered as marginalised communities in this study. The present study aims to focus on the awareness level about education of marginalized

communities of the Community Development (CD) Block and make a comparison is made based on gender, age, and literacy status.

Rationale of the study

These marginalized sections over the ages have been cornered from the main string of the society. Exclusion can rob individuals of dignity, security, and the opportunity to lead a better life. In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". Several studies have been conducted to find out the factors behind the educationally backwardness of the marginalized community throughout India as well as in West Bengal. Some of researchers identified that the lack of awareness among villagers is one of the important reasons for the gap in the educational progress of the disadvantaged sections. Awareness may refer as the key factor to determine the state of being consciousness about certain fact. Educational awareness leads a community to move forward to take educational opportunities with a feeling of needs. Selected study area is an Educationally Backward Block as well as high concentration of marginalised communities with SC (20.32%), ST (40.01%) and OBC population (not specified). Lack of educational awareness is one of the probable factor of educational backwardness. Study on the educational awareness and comparison among different groups is very important to identify the present status and may provide further inputs for future study in the related area.

Review of related literature

There are several studies on the education of marginalized communities in India as well as West Bengal. Some of the significant studies are documented in this section:

Ramesh (2013) identified that the educational levels of the males among the marginalized section is worse than that of the females belonging to the other category. The study depicted that the proportion of illiterate population is considerably higher among the ST and SC communities that among the OBC and others. Education level is mostly centered at the primary level and it is less at higher levels of education among marginalised section.

Guha and Das (2014) noted that literacy rate of Schedule Tribes of West Bengal significantly increased during 1961-2011. However, the attendance rate of STs has not progressed much. The dropout rates of STs are also alarmingly high. The educational advancement of STs in West Bengal is not satisfactory.

Samanta and Bajpai (2015) identified that the western blocks of the Paschim Medinipur district (now part of Jhargram district) have rugged topography and adverse climatic conditions affecting livelihoods of the people, which ultimately reflect in lower development in primary and upper primary education. Nayagram is one the western block of Jhargram district (former Paschim Medinipur district).

Anbuselvi, Leeson (2015) noted several factors affecting tribal education, which are attitude of other students, socio-economic factors, lack of interest, lack of facilities, nature of habitat etc. They suggested that it is very necessary to promote the scheduled tribes and scheduled caste people with special care in the educational and economic establishment.

Maji (2016) discussed dimensional problems faced by tribal girls in access and attainment of education in his study. He focused on the areas of poverty and hunger, indifferent attitude of parents, deficiency of skilled teachers, lack of infrastructure, language and communication problem, school timings, political apathy etc. The author mentioned that most of the tribal parents are unaware about the importance of education and they prefer to engage their children in remunerative employment to add on the family income or to take care their siblings, to rear cattle, to help mother in house hold chores, in collecting the forest products like dried leaves, seeds etc.

Padhi (2016) identified several factors behind exclusion and marginalization in education in Arunachal Pradesh. The major causes as discussed in the study are problems in the provision and organization of education, inadequacies and inequalities, violence and abuse, curriculum, environment, language and communication, inadequate and fragmented human resource development etc.

Bhatla (2017) described that despite various laws, plans, facilities and provisions, inequalities continue to exist in all aspects of social life including education. He identified the most realistic cause

behind the failure to get access to education is a combination of a history of oppression and a lack of access to local, quality education system. The study suggested exploring varying levels of incentives and pursuing national social equality in India.

Pushkarna and Singh (2017) identified several initiatives i.e. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), Kasturba Gandhi Bal Vidyalaya (KGBV) have been taken to get rid of the problem of illiteracy. Each Educationally Backward Block (EEBs) of Punjab has one operational model school. However, the results are still far behind the expectations. They suggested balancing the qualitative and quantitative and quantitative development.

Daripa (2017) identified several reasons for the educational backwardness of Scheduled Tribe in Purulia, which are poverty, parents' attitude, Maoist insurgency, lack of adequate schools, and absence of basic infrastructural amenities, reluctance of the teachers, lack of awareness of the parents etc.

Patra and Panigrahi (2018) described the reasons behind the dropout scenario of marginalized Santal community of Paschim Medinipur District as psychological barriers of the pupils, language problem, parents' unwillingness, Teachers' attitude etc. They recommended recruiting teachers from tribal community or from non-tribal community who are familiar with the tribal culture and behavior. They emphasized on the introduction of Santali medium and raise awareness of education among villagers.

Acharya and Sahoo (2019) identified reasons for enrolling in the school for the scheduled castes population aged 5 to 29 are lack of interest in education, financial constraint, engagement in economic and domestic activities, tradition in community, marriage etc.

Chakraborty (2019) mentioned in his study that only 59.51% of tribal people is literate at Paschim Medinipur District which is far below than district (78%) and state (77.08%) overall literacy rate. The study pointed out several causes behind the educational backwardness which are language gap, social and political factor, environmental and geographical factor, traditional and cultural factor.

After reviewing the various aspects dealt in the aforementioned research documents, objectives of the present investigation were delineated.

Operational definition of the terms & concepts used

Educational awareness - Awareness is the condition or state of being conscious of something. Educational awareness refers to the state of consciousness regarding the importance, impact and opportunity of education from the social, cultural, economic, environmental, psychological and administrative dimensions.

Marginalized - The marginalized section of a society refers to that part of society, which remains at periphery. In the Indian society, there are so many marginalized groups i.e. Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), Religious Minorities and Women. In the present study Marginalized group refers as people from SC, ST and OBC groups.

Youth - In this study Youth refers to the respondent from the age group of 14 to 45 years

Old person - Old person refers to the respondent from the age group of 46 to 65 years

Literate - Literate person refers to a respondent who is able to read and write or have formal education.

Semi-literate - Semi-literate person refers to a respondent who is hardly able to read and write or have no formal education.

Objectives of the study

In order to study the educational awareness of marginalised communities of Nayagram Block, Jhargram district, West Bengal, the following objectives were laid down:

- To find out the differences between the level of educational awareness of male and female.
- To find out the differences between the level of educational awareness of young and old persons.
- To find out the differences between the level of educational awareness of literate and semi-literate persons.

- To identify the needs and views of the villagers for the enhancement of educational opportunities.

Hypotheses

The objectives taken into account were tested using the following hypotheses:

1H_0 – There is no significant difference in the level of educational awareness among male and female.

2H_0 – There is no significant difference in the level of educational awareness among youth and old.

3H_0 – There is no significant difference in the level of educational awareness among literate and semi-literate persons.

Verbal discussion with the respondents/samples was analyzed qualitatively to find out their needs and views for the upliftment of educational opportunities in their area.

Methodology

Location of the study area –

Nayagram Community Development Block has been selected as the study area. Now it is the part of newly created Jhargram District since 4th April, 2017 after bifurcation from Paschim Medinipur District. It's latitudinal and longitudinal location is 22°01'55"N, 87°10'41"E. Total area of the Block is 501.44 sq km. Once it was the part of Red Corridor. It has 336 mouzas and 294 inhabited villages.

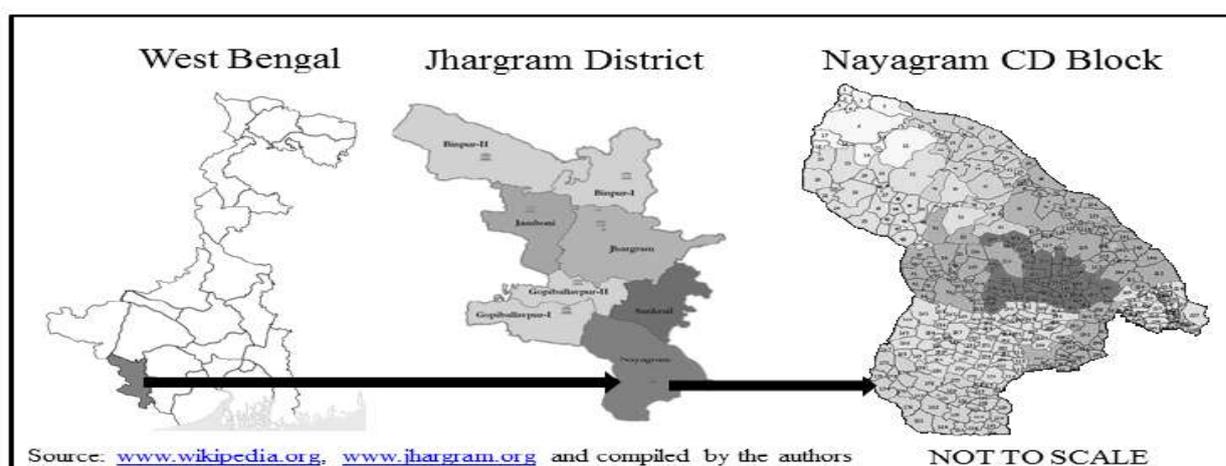


Figure-1: Location map of the study area

According to the Census of India, 2011 total population of the study area is 142199. SC, ST and OBC population, concentrates in the study area. Tribal community including Santal, Munda, Bhumij and Lodha lived here. Major parts of the families are from below poverty line.

Variables

In order to conduct the present investigation, the following variables were taken into considerations:

Independent Variables –

Gender:

Male

Female

Age:

Youth (14 – 45 yrs)

Old (46 – 65 yrs)

Literacy:

Literate

Semi-literate

Dependent Variable-
Educational awareness

Samples - Total number of 200 samples has been collected by using simple random sampling techniques from marginalized community concentrated villages. 41 samples from SC community, 54 samples from ST community, and 105 from OBC community have been collected. Sample distribution is presented by a sample tree in the figure.

Tools used

A self-made standardized tool is used for measurement of educational awareness. The tool is

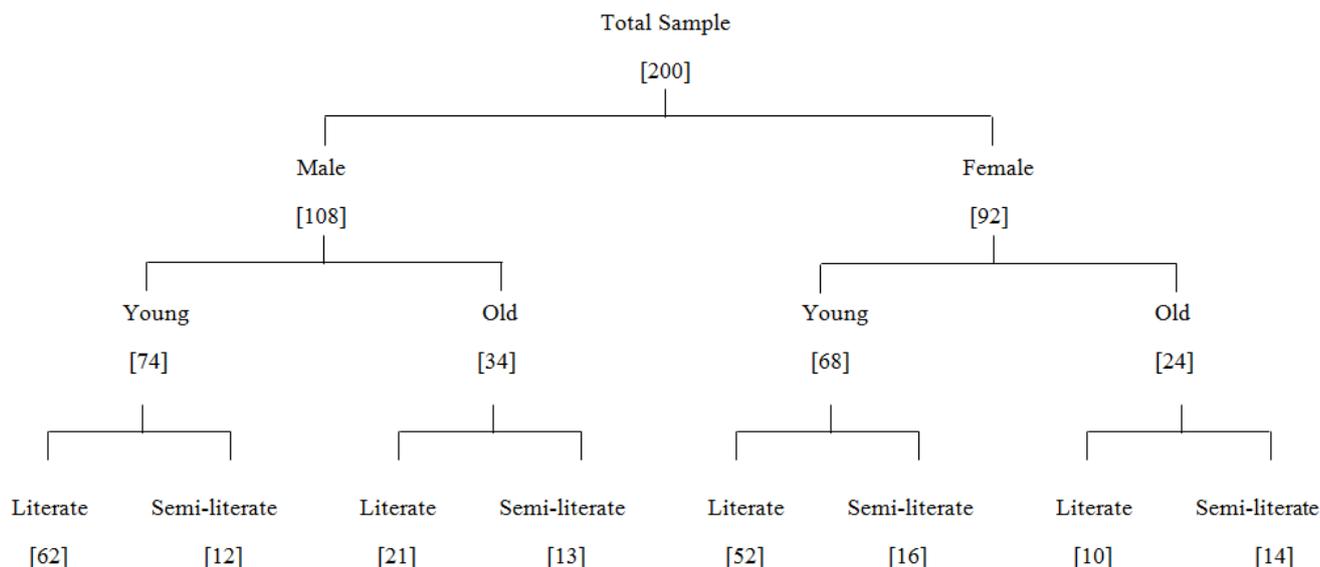


Figure-2: Sampling tree

prepared by the researchers which consists of 20 statements with three options i.e. Agree, Partially agree and Disagree against each statement on a 3-point scale. Among 20 statements, 50% are positive and 50% are negative statements. According to the score key, the expected minimum score is 20 and maximum is 60. The tool was framed based on the consciousness regarding importance, impact and opportunity from various dimensions like social, cultural, economic, environmental, psychological and administrative aspects.

Collection of data

The secondary sources of data regarding the study collected from different sources like books, internet, journals, research papers, Census of India etc. A standardised tool is used for measurement of educational awareness level in the door to door survey. The survey was conducted in the during the early months of 2020. Collected data were analysed and interpreted by using statistical tools. Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis are calculated using Descriptive Statistics of MS Excel. Graphical presentation of the 'distribution differences' are presented by ogive. 't' test is used for hypotheses testing.

Analysis & Interpretation

Awareness level regarding education has been measured. Average awareness score of male, female, young, old, literate, and semi-literate persons are 50.12, 49.62, 50.37, 48.71, 51.45, and 45.78 respectively. These scores depict that male are slightly more aware than female and the same is reflected in case of age, i.e., young are slightly more aware than old. Literate persons are more aware than semi-literate persons. Maximum frequency of score (Modal Value) obtained by male, female, young and old respondents is 52. Maximum frequency of score (Modal Value) obtained by literate persons is 56, whereas, for semi-literate persons it is only 38. Kurtosis values represent that all score distribution patterns are platykurtic. Score distributions of male, female, young, and literate

persons are negatively moderate skewed. However, the score distribution of old and semi-literate persons are approximately symmetric (Table-1). There is no mentionable score distribution difference among male and female, young and old though scores of male and young are slightly higher than female and old respectively. However, there is a distinct difference in score distribution among literate and semi-literate persons. Literate persons are more educationally aware than semi-literate persons are (Table-2 and figure-3, 4& 5). 't' value for male and female is 0.532727 at 0.05 significance level which is less than 't' Critical two-tail value (1.972017). It means there is no significance difference in educational awareness level among male and female persons. There is no significance difference in educational awareness among young and old (calculated value of 't' = 1.623351, and the table value of 't' Critical two-tail = 1.972017). But, there is significance difference in educational awareness among literate and semi-literate persons (calculated value of 't' = 5.843045, and the table value of 't' Critical two-tail = 1.972017).

Table-1: Statistical values of educational awareness scores for different variables

Independent Variables	Male	Female	Young	Old	Literate	Semi-literate
Mean	50.12	49.62	50.37	48.71	51.45	45.78
Median	52.00	51.00	52.00	50.00	52.00	46.00
Mode	52.00	52.00	52.00	52.00	56.00	38.00
Standard Deviation	6.67	6.57	6.52	6.76	5.91	6.65
Kurtosis	-0.37	-0.67	-0.24	-0.97	0.43	-0.98
Skewness	-0.72	-0.54	-0.75	-0.37	-0.96	0.10

Table-2: Data for graphical presentation of the distribution differences of score among different independent variables by Ogive

Score	Male (% CF)	Female (% CF)	Young (% CF)	Old (% CF)	Literate (% CF)	Semi-literate (% CF)
31-35	3.70	2.17	4.23	1.72	2.07	5.45
36-40	11.11	14.13	11.27	17.24	6.90	27.27
41-45	23.15	25.00	22.54	29.31	15.17	47.27
46-50	45.37	47.82	44.37	53.44	35.86	74.54
51-55	72.22	78.26	73.95	77.58	68.97	90.90
56-60	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

% CF = Percentage Cumulative Frequency

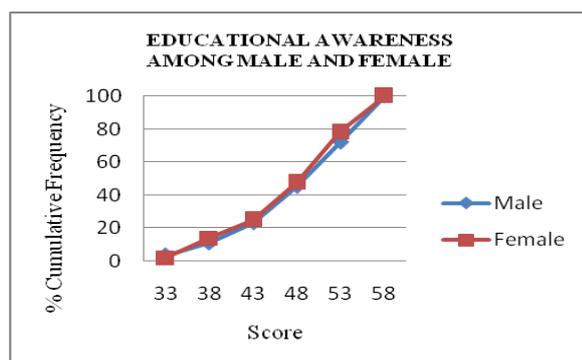


Figure-3: Distribution differences of score

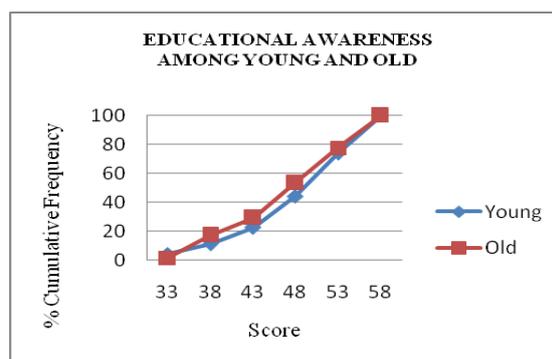


Figure-4: Distribution differences of score among

among male and female

young and old

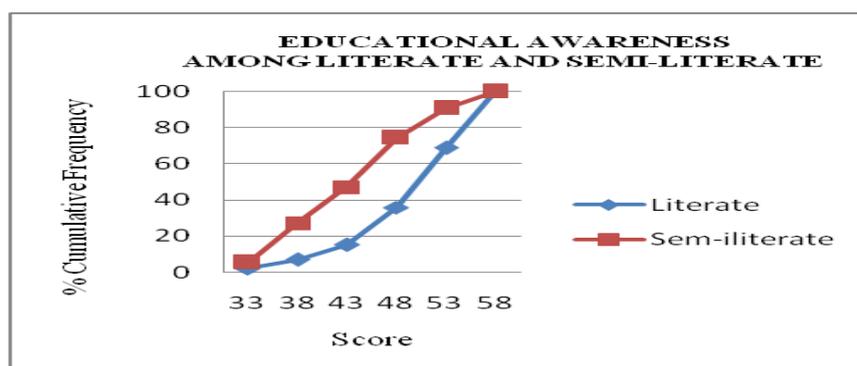


Figure-5: Distribution differences of score among literate and semi-literate

Discussion on the findings

Nayagram CD Block is one of Educationally Backward Block of West Bengal. The present study reflects that there is no significant difference in educational awareness level among male and female unlike reported by K. Ramesh (2013). The present study also reports that there is no significant difference in educational awareness among young and old people. In case of semi-literate and literate persons, the study signifies that the semi-literate persons remain far behind than literate persons. It poses a barrier to access education for future generation. For improvement of education system of the study area, a Government College and a Government Model School have been established recently. The same has been substantiated by G. Anbuselvi and P. John Leeson (2015) in their work on education of tribal children. However, the necessary steps for raising the educational awareness, especially for semi-literate persons are needed. Continuous campaign through the use local cultural elements, orientation, and awareness camp are the necessary instruments to improve the situation. As drawn out from the present investigation, the authors affirm that priority should be given to the semiliterate persons for raising awareness regarding importance, impact, facilities, opportunities, and scope of education. Providing information regarding incentives, vocational training, job opportunities, career guidance should be introduced in grassroot level. Awareness is the gateway to remove ignorance and eventually increase the enrollment and retention of the marginalized children and prevent the dropout rates. In this run, it may be asserted that the number of out-of-school-children will expectedly decrease. Education gives us knowledge of the world around us and changes it into something better. It widens in us an outlook of responsibility and empowerment in life. It helps us assemble opinions and have points of view on things in life according to our contexts. The Importance of Education is an integral issue in one's life. It serves as the gateway to success in the future making and to create many opportunities in ensuring a sustainable life. Through the process of awareness building, the inclusion of marginalized children in the sphere of education will embrace a promising step towards the process of social inclusion.

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