



Socio-economic status of rural scheduled caste female students in higher education

¹R. Suresha and ²B.C. Mylarappa

¹Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Bangalore University, Bangalore-560056.

²Registrar, Bangalore University, Professor of Sociology, Bangalore-560056,

Email: ¹surisociology@gmail.com, ²mylarappabc@gmail.com

*Corresponding author: Rajesh Kumar, Room No. VIP-10, Bairag Dharamshala, Birla Mandir, Kurukshetra-136118, India, Tel: 9138260640, E-mail: rajeshster@gmail.com

Abstract

The present study is concerned with Scheduled Caste (SC) female students in higher education and its major focus is on socio-economic background. It is indeed difficult to point the social and educational status of women including untouchability throughout Indian history till the down of the independence on the canvas of a limited space. To analyzed the Socio-economic background of the SC female students in higher education. The area of the study has been confined to Tumkur town. The sample size of 250 students was drawn on the basis of simple random technique. The sample size was fixed in view of time and the availability of other resources. The major tool of collection of primary data has been the interview scheduled. The primary data collected from the students have been supplemented by relevant secondary data. Majority (98.80) of students are distributed in the younger or middle age group only a small 1.20 percent is in the older age group. Out of 250 respondents, the overwhelming majority (97.20) is unmarried and only a negligible 2.80 percent are a married. 234 (93.60%) respondents out of 250 belong to nuclear type families and a small 6.40 percent to extended families. Majority (60.40%) preferred Kannada as the medium of instructions for the present course. While more than one third (39.60%) preferred English. This study is basically exploratory in nature. As such it cannot make tall claims about the relevance of its findings. But the prime motive of the study is to SC women are institutional problems of the SCs including how is to remodel or redesign our institutional arrangements.

Keywords: Scheduled Caste, Female Students, Higher education, Socio-economic status, Educational benefits.

Introduction

The present study is concerned with rural scheduled caste female students in higher Education and its major focus is on socio-economic background. It is indeed difficult to point the social and educational status of women including untouchable throughout Indian history till the down of the independence on the canvas of a limited space. Female is half the world's population. They perform two-thirds of the world's work. They earn one-tenth of the world's income. They own one hundredth of the world's property. The world female is derived from the old French word 'femelle' and Latin word 'femella' meaning a girl and its diminutive of femina means women.

More distressing and dismal was the picture of the educational status of untouchable women. In general, neither they had access to indigenous schooling nor modern schooling introduced by the

British of the three important agencies which spread modern education in India the British government especially made no efforts till the end of 19th century make a provision for the education of the untouchables in fact, it strictly followed the policy of neutrality in respect of social and religious matter. Least they incur the wrath of the Hindu orthodoxy that strongly resisted all progressive social measures including the promotion of education among untouchables.

Formulation of the research problem

Basically rural scheduled caste female students suffer from two great disadvantages, namely stigmatized caste status and subordinated and dependent sex status. Apart from these, they also suffer from innumerable socio-economic and cultural disabilities imposed upon them by the institutional arrangements like their family, the

caste, the religion etc., Overcoming all these adds, a small section of SC female students has entered into the domain of higher education. In fact, their educational problems and prospects constitute the major core of the present study.

Scope of the study

The present study is concerned with rural scheduled caste female students in higher Education and its major focus is on their problems and prospects. By the terms, higher Education is meant university education imparted through university of its colleges or colleges affiliated to it. The female students in the present study have been drawn from diversified course of higher education such as B.A., B.Sc., B.Com., B.Ed., M.Ed., B.E., M.M.B.S., M.A., M.Sc, L.L.B., B.B.M and B.B.A in fact the SC female students constitute a minority as compared to their male counterparts in higher education. Nevertheless, they constitute a select stratum or elite stratum of the SC student's population in general. To explore their educational problems, prospects and possibilities has been the major objective of the present study.

The significance of the study

Largely the present study falls within the domain of sociology in general and the sub-fields of sociology of education and sociology of women. In fact, the SC women cannot be studied in isolation from the rest of women as a class or as a social category, for they are inseparable part of the latter. However, they suffered more disabilities and disadvantages compared to general mass of women through time and space in the social history of India. The study has practical significance for the administrators, policy makers and planners, feminists, educationists, NGO's and social activists involved in the educational development of SC women especially higher education. As this study is concerned with educational problems and prospects of SC women in higher education, its outcome will help the policy maker's administrators and planners to revise the existing policies and programmes and to draw guideline for future action.

Objectives of the study

1. To analyzed the Socio-Economic background of the rural scheduled caste female students in higher education with special reference to demographic and status characteristics such as age, marital status, caste, education, parental education, occupation and income
2. To study of the whole environment of the students in terms of type their house, facilities available in them and material possessions including paraphernalia and gadgets etc., size and type of family, native place, mother tongue, etc. such an analysis, indeed, is very helpful in building the socio-economic background of the students.

Methodology

The present study consists of rural scheduled caste female students studying in graduate and post-graduate courses of liberal Arts, Science and Commerce, management courses like B.B.M and M.B.A, engineering courses like B.E, Educational courses like B.Ed and M.Ed and professional courses like L.L.B and M.B.B.S. The area of the study has been confined to Tumkur town. The sample size of 250 students was drawn on the basis of simple random technique. The sample size was fixed in view of time and the availability of other resources. The major tool of collection of primary data has been the interview Scheduled. The primary data collected from the students have been supplemented by relevant secondary data.

Results and Discussion

Socio- Economic background of the students

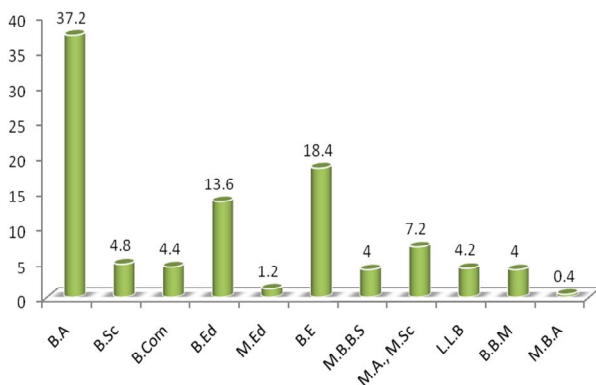
The present study is devoted to the analysis of socio-economic background of the study. The word 'background' used in the present study consists of three settings, namely the demographic, the social and the economic. The demographic setting refers to such characteristics as age and marital status while caste, religion type and size of family, number of sibling's education of the respondents, their parents and grandparents and their siblings etc., and come under social settings. Further

occupation and income status of parents, siblings, their housing conditions and material possessions etc., come into the domain of the economic setting. Apart from these, we shall make attempts to study the nativity, mother tongue, present stay of the respondents and their religion in this study.

All these factors are apparently separate and independent, but in reality they are closely related with one another and cumulatively exert influence on the educational attainment of the sample population. Thus the understanding of the socio-economic background of the students is a pre-requisite for understanding the problems the students faced, the prospects the students perceived and the possibilities they possessed in higher education.

Table: 1. Course wise distribution of the respondents.

S.No	Name of Courses	Respondents	Percentage
1	B.A	93	37.2
2	B.Sc	12	4.8
3	B.Com	11	4.4
4.	B.Ed	34	13.6
5	M.Ed	03	1.2
6	B.E	46	18.4
7	M.B.B.S	10	4.00
8	M.A., M.Sc	18	7.2
9	L.L.B	12	4.2
10	B.B.M	10	4.00
11	M.B.A	01	0.4
	Total	250	100



For analytical purpose of the study, the above courses are classified into two categories namely 1) general and liberal courses and 2) professional courses. General and liberal courses include B.A., B.Sc., B.Com., M.A., M.Sc., and M.Com. While professional courses are B.E., M.B.B.S., B.Ed., M.Ed., L.L.B., B.B.M., and M.B.A (Table, 1).

Age

Age being a biological trait has been socially recognized as one of the important indicators of social status. It is visible and indisputable factor on the basis of which various stages of individual's life are differentiated for education, occupation, marriage, parenthood, maturity, old age et, it also plays a vital role in the determination of attitudes and lifestyle. In a traditional and patriarchal society like India, age is a significant factor especially in the life of a girl in a selected variety of life situations such as, puberty, marriage, fertility, conception and delivery etc. In fact, Indian women are still shy to reveal their exact age due to the prevalence of certain socio-cultural ethos.

Table: 2 Age composition of the respondents

S. No	Age Composition	Respondents	Percentage
1	Younger age group (18-21years)	180	72.00
2	Middle age group (22-25 years)	67	26.80
3	Oder age group (26-29 years and above)	3	1.20
	Total	250	100.00

It can be seen from table, 2 that the preponderant majority (98.80) of students are distributed in the younger or middle age group only a small 1.20 percent is in the older age group the mean age of the sample is 20.67 years in the total sample, the proportion of younger age group of students (72.00) is relatively higher followed by middle age (26.80) and older age (1.20%) groups.

Marital status

Marriage is a social institution based on religious sanction. It is status conferring device. It is through marriage family comes existence and continues to exist. This marriage is a part of the

family. In fact, it is a preparation for and supplement to the family. Through marriage on individual acquires the source of personal gratification coupled with new social obligation and responsibilities (Table, 3).

Table: 3 Marital status of the respondents

S. No	Marital Status	Respondents	Percentage
1	Married	7	2.80
2	Unmarried	143	97.20
	Total	250	100.00

Though the age of marriage has been fixed at 18 years for a female, pre pubertal and child marriages are not uncommon which seriously affect the participation of women in education. Out of about five million marriages which take place every in India, in about two million cases, the brides are below 18 years of age. As against this backdrop, let us examine the marital status of our sample respondents presented.

It can be seen from diagram that out of 250 respondents, the overwhelming majority (97.20) is unmarried and only a negligible 2.80 percent are a married. This analysis indeed reflects the fact the social practice of early marriage which was one rampant among the SCs is slowly on the wane among the educated SCs.

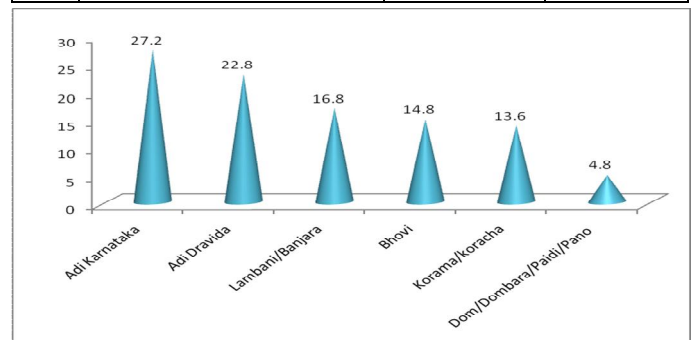
Caste

Before we analyze the caste as an important variable of the social background of the respondents, let us take a cursory look at the sc population in Karnataka, its district wise distribution and numerical strength of the individual castes clubbed under the generic term, ‘Scheduled Caste’ with special reference to the district Tumkur where the area of study has been confined to Tumkur town. The rural-urban distribution of the SCs were concerned in Karnataka, 64, 17, 243 (74.93%) resided in rural area and 21, 46,687 (25.07%) in urban areas. Majorities of 27.7% of the respondents are belonging to Adi Karnataka caste group. 22.8% of the respondents are belonging to Adi Dravida caste group. 16.8% of the respondents are belonging to Lambani / Banjara caste group. 14.8% of the

respondents are belonging to Bhovi caste group. 13.6% of the respondents are belonging to Korama / Koracha caste group and only 4.8% of the respondents are belonging to Dom / Dombara / Paidi / Pano caste group (Table, 4).

Table: 4. Caste distribution of the respondents

S. No.	Castes	Respondents	Percentage
1	Adi Karnataka	68	27.2
2	Adi Dravida	57	22.8
3	Lambani/Banjara	42	16.8
4	Bhovi	37	14.8
5	Korama/koracha	34	13.6
6	Dom/Dombara/Paidi/Pano	12	4.8
	Total	250	100



Family type

There has been fast and rapid social change in the family patterns across India due to the forces of modernization at work of the different types of family patrilineal, matrilineal, partrilocal, matriloca, monogamous, polygamous, and extended and nuclear families are most conspicuous in the contemporary Indian scenario. In fact, these two types of families are also relevant for the present study. A line of distinction between these two types of family is noteworthy here. The extended family type is associated with agrarian peasant societies while the nuclear family is the characteristic of modern industrial societies.

The above diagram indicates that 234 (93.60%) respondents out of 250 belong to nuclear type families and a small 6.40 percent to extended families. The foregoing analysis clearly shows that nuclear families are more numerous in the sample than those of the extended type (Table, 5).

Table: 5 Distribution of the respondents by types of family

S. No	Type of Family	Respondents	Percentage
1	Nuclear Family	234	93.60
2	Extended family	16	6.40
	Total	250	100.00

It can be observed from Table, 6 that for the overwhelming majority (84.40%) of the respondents Kannada is the mother tongue. Only 8 percent of the students stated that their mother tongue is Telugu. Interesting 6.40 percent of the respondents state Lambani is their mother tongue. Only for 3 (1.20) of the students Tamil is the mother tongue.

Table: 6. Mother tongues of the respondents

S. No	Languages	Respondents	Percentage
1	Kannada	211	84.40
2	Telugu	20	8.00
3	Tamil	3	1.20
4	Lambani	16	6.40
	Total	250	100

Information is available only for 233 father and 244 mothers and the rest come under no information category. Hence, the sample of father is 233 and mother is 244.

Table: 7. Parents educational levels

S. No.	Parents	Educational levels				Total
		Illiterates	Low education	Medium education	High education	
1	Father	66 (28.33)	62 (26.61)	57 (24.46)	48 (20.60)	233
2	Mother	112 (45.90)	63 (25.82)	57 (23.36)	12 (4.92)	244

It can be observed from Table, 7 that out of 233 father of the respondents, 28.33 per cent are illiterates; 26.61 percent are low educated; 24.46 percent are medium educated and 20.60 percent are high educated. Of the 244 mothers of the respondents, as many as 45.90 percent are illiterates; 25.82 percent are low educated; 23.36 percent are medium educated and only a small 4.92 are high educated.

It can be observed from the above table that the majority of 47.20 percent of fathers belong to Agriculture. 24.40 percent of fathers belong to self

Table: 8. Fathers' Occupations' and Occupational Status

S. No	Occupational status	Respondents	Percentage
1	Government Employ	07	2.88
2	Agriculture	118	47.20
3	Private Employ	52	20.80
4	Self Employ	61	24.40
5	Daily wages	12	4.80
	Total	250	100

Table: 9 Annual income of fathers of the respondents

S. No.	Income	Respondents	Percentage
1	Poor income group 10,000 and below	196	78.40
2	Medium income group 10,001 to 30,000	16	6.40
3	High income group 30,001 and above	38	15.20
	Total	250	100

employ. 20.80 percent of fathers belong to private employ. 4.80 percent of fathers belong to daily wages and only 2.88 percent of fathers government employ. It can be observed from the above table that the preponderant majority of 78.40 percent of fathers belong to poor income group while 15.20 percent of the fathers to high income group. A small 6.40 percent of fathers come under medium income group (Table, 8).

Housing Conditions and Material Possessions

Housing is one of the fundamental needs of people. It provides not only shelter and security but also fulfils one's psychological, economical and status needs. In fact, it mirrors the economic status and living standard of people. Owning a house by a SC is definitely a symbol of status and prestige given his poor material existence (Table, 9).

Types of House

It could be seen from Table.10 that a majority of (63.6%) of the respondents mentioned semi Pucca House followed by quite a considerable percentage (24) from puuca house such as RCC buildings and only 12.4% of the respondents in the sample mentioned kacha houses such thatched houses or huts table 10.

Table:10. Types of houses

S. No.	Types of House	Respondents	Percentage
1	Pucca House –RCC Building	60	24
2	Semi-Pucca House - brick wall with cement plaster	159	63.6
3	Kacha House-Thatched houses	31	12.4
	Total	250	100

Findings of the present study

1. A small number of respondents expressed their desire to become self employed. It is from this point of view the government should create more structure of opportunity for the self employment of SC women for their development and employment.
2. The study reconfirms the inter caste disparity in the utilization of educational benefits. It is therefore, necessary to identify the course for extreme backwardness among certain scheduled castes in education and initiate action to induce them so as to utilize educational benefits.
3. The practice of endogamy as one of the feature the caste system has seriously affected the selection of mates. It is evident from the fact that the preponderant majority in our study preferred marry within their sub-castes. Hence the government should take steps to mitigate this problem.
4. The scheduled caste female students facing ill treatment based on gender bias is found in the study to a small extent. This problem has to be tackled by bringing about suitable change in the attitudinal frame of teachers administrators and other involved the spread of education for the benefit of disadvantaged children at different levels of learning.
5. The urban bias inherent in our educational system is seriously affecting the education of the disadvantage children, particularly girls in rural areas. Thus there is an imperative need on

the part of government to get this bias removed through concrete action.

Conclusion

This study is basically exploratory in nature. As such it cannot make tall claims about the relevance of its findings. But the prime motive of the study is to SC women are institutional problems of the SCs including how is to remodel or redesign our institutional arrangements through a radical structural change with emphasis on equity and equality of women as par with men in all spheres of social life. Moreover, the insights emerging from the study point to the need for further research in the area. They could also be useful to the planners and policy makers to evolve new strategies for the educational development SC women.

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