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ATTITUDE OF SCHEDULED CASTE STUDENTS TOWARDS HIGHER EDUCATION: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NALBARI DISTRICT OF ASSAM

ABSTRACT:

Education plays a vital role in the development of a society. Specially, higher education plays a significant role in this context. Higher education can bring unimaginable changes in every aspect of our life. This stage of education can be considered very significant in the matter of reforming any society. Students coming from the Scheduled caste form an important part of our society. Therefore, higher education of the students coming from the schedule caste community also plays an important role in reformation of any society. So, we can say that the Scheduled caste students should have a positive attitude towards higher education at the present situation. The investigator in this paper tries to find out the attitude of schedule caste students towards higher education. The main objective of the present study was to study the attitude of scheduled caste students (both male and female) towards higher education. It's another objective was to study the attitude of rural and urban scheduled caste students towards higher education. The investigator also tries to find out the attitude of scheduled caste students from Science stream and Arts stream towards higher education. The descriptive survey method was selected for collection of data for the present investigation. The sample of the present study was consisted of 120 students coming from different categories of scheduled caste community (20 male and 20 female, 20 rural and 20 urban and 20 Science and 20 Arts students) were selected randomly from 4 Provincialised Degree colleges of Nalbari District. Self-prepared questionnaire was used by the investigator for finding out the attitude of the scheduled caste students towards higher education.

The study reveals that there exists significant difference in attitude of male and female scheduled caste students towards higher education. The investigator has found significant difference in attitude of rural and urban scheduled caste students towards higher education. It is also found by the investigator that students who are enrolled in Science stream are more positive in their attitude for higher education than the students enrolled in Arts stream.

Key words: Attitude, Scheduled caste, higher education, Nalbari District, community

INTRODUCTION:

Education plays an important role in development of any society as well as any community. Specially, higher education plays a significant role in this context. Higher education can bring unimaginable changes in every aspect of our life. This stage of education can be considered very significant in the matter of reforming any society.

Higher education means education in the post-higher secondary stage. This education means education which is given at the universities and colleges along with the technological institutions. It is higher in the sense that this education is given at the top most stage of formal education. The people after getting higher education can become highly cultured and can reform our society from every point of view. Higher education also works as a backbone of the country's workforce.

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Scheduled caste student on the other hand means those students who belong to so-called low caste social groups, whose members are considered to have a lot of social disadvantages. They are the officially designated groups of students and among the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups of students in India. The terms scheduled castes and scheduled terms are recognized in the constitution of India and the groups are designated in one or other of the categories. As per Article 366 (24) of the Constitution of India the Scheduled Castes means such castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under Article 341 to be scheduled Castes for the purposes of the (Indian) constitution (“Chapter-ii, Social Constitutional Provisions for Protection and development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes”). According to the Census Report 2011, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes comprise about 16.6% and 8.6% percent respectively, of India’s population.

It is the fact that success of any type of educational course depends largely on the attitude they have for their particular aim. The students are able to get success in any course if they have positive attitude for their particular course. If the students are motivated and positive minded towards their educational courses, effectiveness will be enhanced. The success of completing their courses is directly dependent on a positive mind set towards their courses of studies.

But, it is very unfortunate that the most of the students have to complete their courses of studies not because they like it, but because their parents. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to find a positive mindset among the students for their education. In some cases some students take a particular course not to fulfill their aim, but their parents. As a result, it becomes difficult to find a positive attitude among the students for their courses of studies they are pursuing. Same case may be applicable in respect of scheduled castes students also. Therefore, it becomes important to take a study regarding attitude of the scheduled castes students towards higher education they are pursuing. As higher education is the most significant stage of education, for a country’s development as well as for making individual more cultured and refined in life, so a study on attitude of the scheduled castes students pursuing higher education can be considered significant.

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NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Higher education has a significant role to play in the entire development of a nation. It is an important stage of education, which helps individual to become a good citizen of the society. It provides nation building by determining the quality of all activity of individual life. The whole life of one depends on the knowledge that he gathers during his stage of higher education. So, if there is no positive attitude of the students whether coming from the general category or the scheduled caste their efforts of getting success in life will not be perfect. Lack of positive attitude has adverse affects on the quality of education also.

The students belong to scheduled castes form a large community in our country. Though the educational facilities and incentives offered to this community are found substantial but still remain backward in the field of education. They are given special facilities and relaxations in all aspects of their life like relaxation in respect of fees, in respect of age for getting govt. job, in respect of marks for any competitive examination etc. They get reservation in respect of government job also. But, often the seats reserved for them in the higher education institutions cannot be filled due to lack of qualified applicants. Since independence, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes were given Reservation Status, guaranteeing political representation, preference in promotion, quota in universities, free and stipend education, scholarships, banking services, various government schemes and the constitution lays down the general principles of positive discrimination. No doubt the overall enrollment percentage in respect of scheduled caste students in higher education institutions has notably increased from 2014-15 to 2020-21. The Annual Survey by the Ministry of Education gives a clear picture of the enrollment of the scheduled castes students in the higher educational institutions of the country. It is significant to note that according to the survey, a total of 4.14 crore students (crossing the 4 crore mark for the first time) enrolled in higher education institutions in India in 2020-21 of which 14.2% belong to the scheduled castes students. The enrollment of the students belongs to scheduled caste has grown up to 27.98% during the period from 2014-15 to 2020-21. While in 2014-15, 46.06 lakh students coming from the scheduled community were enrolled in higher education institution, the number has increased up to 58.95 lakhs in the corresponding period 2020-21. The growth in enrollment of scheduled caste students in 2020-21 as compared to 2019-20 is 4.2%, whereas the growth in 2019-20 over 2018-19 was 1.6% (All India Survey on Higher Education, 2020-21).

So, in the field of higher education, attitude of the scheduled castes students is an important aspect to be studied. Students pursuing higher education should have a positive attitude for bringing success in this field. So, with the help of studying the nature of attitude of male and female scheduled castes students, rural and urban scheduled castes students and also the scheduled castes students from Science and Arts stream is considered significant. Because, a positive attitude means keeping positive mindset and think about the greater good, which is very important for the students pursuing higher education. A positive attitude has many benefits to bring success in the field of education. The present study therefore tries to focus on finding out the attitude of the male and female students, rural and urban and students from Science and Arts stream coming from the scheduled castes community at the field of higher education.

Higher stage of education is an important stage for leading a strong and better educational life for individual. So, when students whether from general category or scheduled castes do not have positive attitude towards higher education, it will affect them in their achievement or getting success at this stage of higher education and fulfill the aim of completing it. But, it is unfortunate

for us that most of the students pursuing education at this stage is found to have negative attitude for their education. They have just taken it for fulfilling their parent's aim. There are some students in our society who have taken it just because to get a good job only. The case may not be exceptional in respect of scheduled castes students also. But, higher education is not such type of education which can be achieved without any dedication. Students coming from the scheduled castes community also must have dedication for completion of education at this stage. They must be sincere while pursuing education at this level. Therefore, it becomes important to have a positive attitude towards education at the higher level, so far as it is not easy for them to complete it. So, the investigator became interested for taking a topic like this.

In fact, it is observed that no study has been conducted at Nalbari District in respect of this issue. Therefore, the investigator has decided to take a study regarding the attitude of scheduled castes students towards higher education.

The present study focuses on attitude of scheduled castes students of Nalbari district which will help to know about the situation in this respect. The study mainly focuses on studying the attitude of male and female, rural and urban and students coming from the scheduled castes community who are enrolled in the Science stream and Arts stream.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The present study has been entitled as –

Attitude of Scheduled Caste Students towards Higher Education- A Study with special reference to Nalbari district of Assam.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the attitude of male and female scheduled caste students towards higher education.
2. To study the attitude of rural and urban scheduled caste students towards higher education.
3. To study the attitude of scheduled caste students from Science stream and Arts stream towards higher education.

HYPOTHESES:

Ho1: There exist no significant difference in attitude of male and female scheduled caste students towards higher education.

Ho2: There exist no significant difference in attitude of rural and urban scheduled caste students towards higher education.

Ho3: There exist no significant difference in attitude of scheduled caste students from Science stream and Arts stream towards higher education.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The present study is delimited to the followings –

1. The study is delimited to Nalbari District.
2. The study is delimited to male and female students from scheduled caste community only.
3. It has been delimited to both rural and urban provincialized degree colleges of Nalbari District.
4. It is delimited to scheduled caste students from Science stream and Arts stream only.
5. The study has been delimited to the session 2021-2024 only.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Rakshit, G. D. (2012) in his book entitled “Education among Scheduled Castes, Privatization and Enrolment Perspective in Higher Education” analyses different policies, five-year plans, enrolment pattern, gap between the scheduled caste and students coming from the general category. He also found discrimination in respect of gender and in other in higher education. It highlighted that privatization in higher education has not made any change in the gender disparity among the scheduled caste students in respect of male.

Barman, A.L. (2014) conducted a study on “Attitude of Scheduled caste students towards education in Kamrup District of Assam” by taking a purposive sample of 300 school going scheduled caste students. The study aimed to find out the attitude of sample students towards their education. The investigator used self-developed standardized attitude scale to collect the required data. The data for this study was collected through field survey. The investigator found that the attitudes of school students are found favourably moderate level of attitudes towards education.

Chahal, D. & Kumar, R. (2017) took a study on “Understanding Attitude of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Parents towards the Rights Related to Health and Care of the Children”. The investigator took 60 parents as sample from rural area of district Udhampur of Jammu and Kashmir, which consists of 30 mothers and 30 fathers. The investigator used a self-made interview schedule for collection of required data. The main aim of the study was to find out the awareness among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribe parents towards the rights related to health and care of the child. The study reveals that most of the sample fathers and mothers gave favourable responses, which indicates that they are aware about rights related to health and care of the children. In fact, they have the positive and favourable attitude towards health and care of the children.

Acharya, S. & Sahoo, H. (2019) conducted a study on “Education among Scheduled Caste Population in India”. The investigator attempted to explore the changing trends in respect of literacy among the scheduled caste in order to identify the determinants of higher education. The study also tried to explore the main reasons for never enrolling or we can say discontinuing/dropping out from educational institutions among the students from scheduled caste community. The result of the study shows that though there is an increasing trend in respect of literacy rate among the scheduled caste students, it remains quite below the national average. In this respect gender disparity is found. The reasons of low level of higher education are failing

in examination, heavy dropouts and also stagnation due to their poor socio-economic background etc. Although various efforts are made by the Central and State government to remove the differences in educational attainment among these groups with the help of different constitutional provision from time to time, but still, there is gaps to be removed.

Sangral, M. (2022) conducted a study on “Problems Encountered by the Scheduled Caste Students Pursuing Post Graduation at Central University of Jammu”. The study found some problems faced by the students coming from the scheduled caste community. The study also reveals that most of the students at university level were not aware about their welfare schemes offered by the Govt. of India and also they had lack of proper guidance.

METHODOLOGY:

Research methodology may be understood as a systematic way of solving the research problem. It can be regarded as science of finding out how research is done scientifically. For doing any investigation, research methodology is necessary for the researcher to design his problem for finding out the solution. Methodology of the research activity includes the research design preparing blue print necessary for conducting his study. Research methodology helps in bringing smoothness to the research operation.

METHOD OF THE STUDY:

Method is the process of collecting data for making any decision. But while using any method in the research work, the investigator should be careful. An investigator must have thorough knowledge and understanding of all the methods which can be used for any investigation. In the present study, the investigator employed descriptive survey method for doing the research work.

STUDY AREA:

The present investigator has considered Nalbari district of Assam as the area for the present study. The study covers both the rural and urban sample provincialized Degree colleges of Nalbari district of Assam.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY:

For the present study, all the scheduled caste students pursuing higher education in all the provincialised Degree colleges of Nalbari District constitute the population and a sample of 120 scheduled caste students (20 male and 20 female, 20 rural and 20 urban and 20 from Arts stream and 20 from Science stream) has been selected randomly from 4 provincialised Degree colleges of Nalbari District.

SOURCES OF DATA:

The primary data were collected through field survey based on self-prepared questionnaire. The investigator collected secondary data through different books, government reports, documents, official records, periodicals and various publications etc.

TOOLS USED:

Any investigation can be done with the help of research tools. The research tools should be proper for collection of the required data. For the present investigation, the investigator used self-prepared questionnaire for the collection of required data.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE SELF-PREPARED QUESTIONNAIRE:

The investigator had estimated reliability and validity of the self-prepared questionnaire by following certain procedure.

RELIABILITY:

The investigator estimated reliability of the self-prepared questionnaire by the split-half method on a sample of 50 scheduled castes students who are pursuing higher education. The split-half reliability has been found to be .78 which indicates a high degree of reliability.

SCORING PROCEDURE:

In the standardization process of any research tool, there is the need of scoring or rating. For the present study, the self-prepared questionnaire has been made with 3 ratings such as Strongly Agree, Agree and Disagree. Accordingly, the scoring pattern has been fixed as 2 for strongly Agree, 1 for Agree and 0 for Disagree.

VALIDITY:

The prepared questionnaire for the present investigation possesses high content validity, as the items of the questionnaire at the first stage for tryout were selected on the basis of unanimous agreement of different experts in the particular field. On the basis of opinion of the experts, adjustments were made by the investigator and the questionnaire was finalized for collecting the required data. In this way, the researcher established the content validity for the self-prepared questionnaire.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED:

The statistical technique for the present study was determined by considering the objectives of the study. In this study Mean, S.D. and t-test were used for analyzing the data.

DATA COLLECTION:

Data collection is an important part of any research. For the collection of data, the investigator personally visited the sampled colleges of Nalbari District.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA AND RESULTS:

- Table-1:** Showing the significant difference in attitude of male and female scheduled castes students towards higher education.

Group	N	Mean	S.D	SE _D	t-value	Level of significance (0.01 and 0.05 level)
Male	20	14				Significant at 0.01 level

Female	20	15	0.61	0.134	7.46	Significant at 0.05 level
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The above table (table-1) shows that the mean score obtained by the male student is 14 the mean score obtained by the female student is 15 with S.D 0.61 and SE_D is 0.134. The calculated t-value is 7.46, which is much greater than the table value and significant at both the level of 5% and 1% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. So, it can be concluded that there exists significant difference in attitude of male and female students in respect of their higher education.

2. Table-2: Showing the significant difference in attitude of rural and urban scheduled castes students towards higher education.

Group	N	Mean	S.D	SE _D	t-value	Level of significance (0.01 and 0.05 level)
Rural	20	16	0.5	0.11	18.9	Significant at 0.01 level
Urban	20	14				Significant at 0.05 level

From the table-2, it has been found that the mean score obtained by the rural scheduled castes students is 16, while the mean score obtained by the urban scheduled castes students is 14 with S.D 0.5 and SE_D is 0.11. The calculated t-value is 18.9, which is much greater than the table value and significant at both the level of 5% and 1% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. So, it can be concluded that there exists significant difference in attitude of rural scheduled castes students and urban scheduled castes students with regard to higher education.

3. Table-3: Showing the significant difference in attitude of scheduled castes students from Science stream and Arts stream for higher education.

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	SE _D	t-value	Level of significance (0.01 and 0.05 level)
Science	20	21	0.96	0.21	14.3	Significant at 0.01 level
Arts	20	18				Significant at 0.05 level

From the table-3, it is found that the mean score obtained by the scheduled caste students from Science stream is 21, while the mean score obtained by the scheduled castes students from Arts stream is 18 with S.D 0.96 and SE_D is 0.21. The calculated t-value is 14.3, which is much greater

than the table value and significant at both the level of 5% and 1% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. So, it can be concluded that there exists significant difference in attitude of scheduled castes students from Science stream and scheduled castes students from Arts stream in regard to their higher education.

DISCUSSION:

Attitude of students plays a great role as a motivating factor for completing the course successfully. Studying at higher stage is considered very significant for students and it has a great weight for their life too. So, the students pursuing education at this stage should have a positive attitude towards their education, so that it can bring success to them. Further, completion of higher education is not an easy task. So, the students in this stage whether coming from general category or from scheduled caste and other backward should have strong positive attitude towards their education. Therefore, the present study tries to explore the attitude of the male and female scheduled castes students, rural and urban scheduled castes students and also the scheduled castes students from Science stream and Arts stream at the higher level.

The investigator found significant differences in attitude of male and female scheduled castes students, urban and rural scheduled castes students and scheduled castes students from Science stream and Arts stream. According to the study girls' attitude towards higher education is more positive than the boys. The study also reveals that urban scheduled castes students are more positive in attitude than the rural scheduled castes students. The scheduled castes students from the Science stream are found more positive in attitude towards their higher education compared to the scheduled castes students from Arts stream. Most of the sample prefers Arts subjects (non-technical) than Science or other technical subjects. Majority of the sample opine that higher education is time consuming and it is preferred by them because of the reason of job security.

CONCLUSION:

An individual's attitude towards any activity may affect the end product. If an individual does not do activity with enjoyment and good attitude, he will not be able to get success in his occupation. In fact, students' attitude towards their education, whether at the higher level or lower level affects their academic achievement. The investigator therefore tried to make a comparative study of attitude of male and female scheduled castes students, rural and urban scheduled castes students and the scheduled castes students from Science stream and Arts stream. The investigator found that majority of the students were continuing their higher education for certain personal issues and getting a good employment opportunity. Their opinion clearly reveals that there is tendency to get good job after completion of their higher education. The study clearly shows that there exists significant difference in attitude of male and female scheduled castes students, urban and rural scheduled castes students and scheduled castes students from Science stream and Arts stream.

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