

A Qualitative study of Education Officials' Perceptions of the Effects of Caste, Poverty and Gender on School Participation and Transition of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes students in a state in Northeastern India

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INTRODUCTION

- One of the pressing issues in the Indian education system is the school participation and transition of students from the Scheduled Castes and Tribes communities.
- These groups, now about 25% of the Indian population and mostly residing in rural areas, continue to be among the poorest and least educated groups in India¹.
- This study aims to examine the main factors that contribute to the current status of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes student groups and the educational and social policies that are facilitating, or constraining, progress in education at all levels.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

- Prior research studies have explored the complex and dynamic interplay between caste, class, and gender (with emphasis on women)²; caste and its impact on education³; affirmative action and its influence on Scheduled Castes students from higher education⁴.
- This study aims to address a gap in the existing literature by attempting to better understand the educational and social factors that act as barriers or enablers to students from the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, from discontinuing and dropping out of school.
- Emphasis has been placed on the participation of girls/women belonging to these communities as the risk of them dropping out after high school and secondary school is high⁵.
- In addition, studying poverty level is important because it contributes to difference in student achievement both between students and between schools⁶.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question 1: How do educational officials in Green Estate perceive the needs for members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes in their jurisdictions, and specifically for girls from these communities?

Research Question 2: In the view of education officials in Green Estate, which educational and social policies have facilitated, or constrained, progress broadly for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in their jurisdictions, and specifically for girls from these communities?

Research Question 3: In the view of education officials, what educational and social policies could influence the future of students, particularly girls, from the Scheduled Castes and Tribes communities in Green Estate?

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

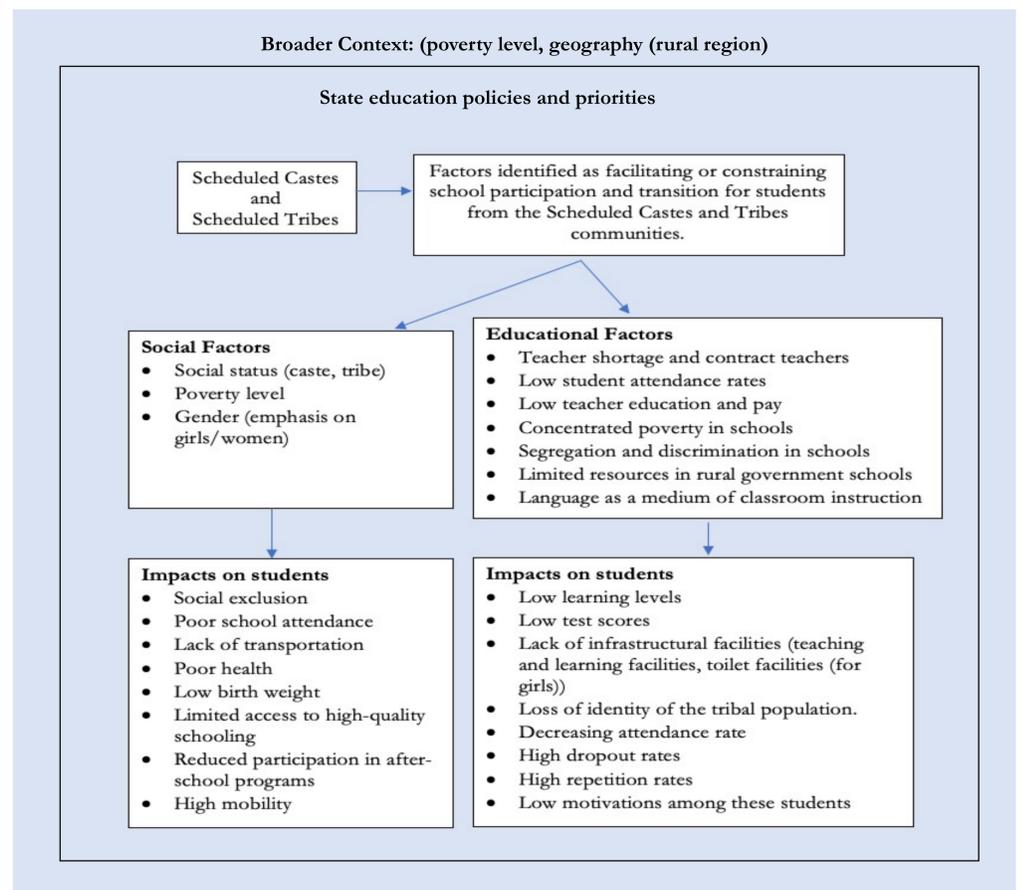
The **analytical framework** for this study is based on five bodies of literature:

- The relationship between caste, tribe, and educational opportunities⁷;
- The relationship between poverty and educational outcomes^{6,7};
- A focused review on girls from the Scheduled Castes and Tribes communities¹;
- Legal safeguards for preventing segregation and discrimination; and
- Education factors that have influenced educational progress of students from the Scheduled Castes and Tribes communities⁷.

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Figure 1: Analytical Framework



Note: Adapted from Robson (2016)⁸

METHODOLOGY

Method

- The study shall utilize a basic qualitative research study approach.
- The study will be based on interviews with education functionaries who are key decision makers at different school levels.
- This study will be conducted in a heterogenous state (pseudonym: Green Estate) in the Northeastern region of India.
- The focus will be rural government schools, specifically those managed by the Department of Education, Tribal and Social Welfare Department.

Data

- Semi-structured interviews either in-person or virtually.
- Detailed interview notes during and after the interview to capture non-verbal communication⁹.

Data Collection Instrument

- Interview protocol.
- Documents will be reviewed to corroborate findings from the interviews. For instance, information on state and district policies, school-level data, and contextual information will be referred to address specific aspects of the research questions not sufficiently addressed through interviews.

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