

WORK AND ILLITERACY - A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ABOUT EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS OF THE SANITARY WORKERS CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Education is the key to accomplish social equality. Without educational skills, no one can be considered a complete personality. In the Indian constitution, getting education is one of the basic rights of the individual. It also emphasized that no one shall be excluded from getting education in the name of the region, gender, caste, and socio-economic conditions. But when we compare the previous census details, it is shown that the vulnerable and the marginalized people are backward in educational attainment statistics. In this sense, the educational attainment of marginalized groups is linked with the social taboos which are unseen which makes their discontinuation or dropouts of education. In India most of the states are offering free education to their people, even though education is free to all, the circumstances of the educational external environment are acting as barriers based on social strata. The deep root of the caste system and the occupational heredity of the marginalized groups have acted as an invisible cause which increases the educational dropouts as well as increases the gap between the educational institutions versus marginalized groups. With these views, the researcher aims to study the educational conditions of the sanitary workers' children. The objectives of the study are to bring out the educational conditions of the children of the sanitary workers, to analyze the factors influencing the discontinuation of education and to suggest suitable measures to strengthen their educational attainment. Secondary sources have been used to determine the educational attainment of the sanitary workers' children. The research reveals that the existing social structure and the hierarchy of the caste are the factors having a direct relation with the lower educational achievements among the children. The social stigma, biased treatment on the basis of their parental occupation, ill-treatment in the school environment, and the prejudiced behaviors of peer groups in schools are linked with the educational achievements of the children.

Key Words: Sanitary workers, Social stigma, caste hierarchy

Introduction

Education is the tool for empowerment. Educational attainment provides the chance for making self-development and also increases the economic value of the individual. Educational knowledge brings rational thinking as well as enriched decision-making power. School-level educational achievement gives opportunities involving higher education and a minimum chance of employment. Education enlightens the chance of developing a community with enough level of awareness.

Caste and Indian society are inseparable. Varna's system had deeply rooted in those days. Based on that the caste and its dominance had been fixed in our society. The dominant castes had all the privileges and the lower strata

A.SATHISHWARAN

*Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Sociology,
Periyar University, Salem, TamilNadu, India*

Dr. P. SETHURAJAKUMAR

*Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Periyar
University, Salem, TamilNadu, India*

castes faced the all vulnerabilities. Basic civil rights and social and political rights were not enjoyed by the marginalized castes in those days. The regular practices of the caste structure make stronger become stronger and the poor become the poorer situation.

Social conditions of sanitary workers

The hierarchy of the caste system was fully engaged in those days. Based on the nature of work social conditions and the caste, people were treated accordingly. In that ladder, the people who were coming under the worker's category had many difficulties and vulnerability. The concept of pure and pollution was used in those days. The people at upper strata have the power to control the other group of people where as the people at the last strata faced the dominant and race atrocities from the other groups as well as by their nature of work.

Especially the Shudras, the workers' category were forced to serve the other three categories of people. Varna, is deeply rooted and control all the social actions of the society. Among the Shudras, some of them were involved in the manual scavenging work in those days. They were considered untouchables and they were forbidden from all normal social activities.

They were not allowed to enter the temples, and their presence was prohibited in front of the higher caste people to avoid pollution. Their touch was also considered a serious polluted action in those days. They were not considered as human beings but rather physical beings.

Each group of Shudras had their duties to perform for the upper caste people with loyalty. Their service had not been considered a duty, it was considered their fate to serve the upper-category groups.

Refusal of civil rights

The refused of civil rights was one of the main social evils which happened against the category of Shudras in those days. The people at lower strata were not allowed to fetch water from the public ponds. Their presence in public places was limited and their basic civil and social rights became void through the blind system of Varna.

Discrimination against sanitation workers

The blind system of Varna already has made their presence invisible in their society. People doing the sanitary work were discriminated against and neglected through the various layers of the society. It was considered as their hereditary occupation or employment. Their basic right to education, political participation, and social affiliation were fully denied and they were forced to work for the welfare of society. Education was mainly prohibited in the name of false and error Varna methods.

Objectives

The following are the objectives of this study

1. To know the educational conditions the children of the sanitary workers
2. To analyze the factors influencing the discontinuation of the education
3. To suggest suitable measures to strengthen the educational attainment of children

Materials and Methods

Secondary sources have been used to determine the educational attainment of the sanitary workers' children. The government census data, unpublished thesis, papers, unpublished project reports, and information from the NGOs



are collected to elucidate the educational status of the sanitary workers' children. The study is purely descriptive and it tries to uncover the social barriers which make the condition of vulnerability in the aspect of educational achievement among the children of sanitary works.

Present Educational Conditions of Sanitary Workers Children

Before independence through the false and untrue Varna system, the sanitary workers were away from the educational system. They also believe that they must protect the human environment clean. But after independence through constitutional measures, this social evil was eradicated. In recent days there is no Varna system, but the impact and the ideology of the caste system still exist. We have enough legal mechanisms to curb the activities of discrimination and injustice in the name of caste and structure. But till today the impact of the previous caste system is transforming the continuous negligence and the hereditary transformation. These hidden and invisible orthodox ideologies are printed and bound with the minds of the people as well as the vulnerable groups too. There are two types of avoidance regarding educational opportunities i.e. one is prevention from society in the name of caste and another one is self-prevention due to social class. These two approaches are having a remarkable role in the educational achievements of the sanitary workers' children.

Studies related to the Education Condition of Sanitary Workers' Children

A study conducted by the Indian Institute of Management, (2012) in Ahmedabad stated the poor

condition of education achievements among the children of sanitary workers.

It mentioned that among the respondents eight percent completed their high school and twelve percent completed their higher education. Only four percent of the respondents were in the category of graduate eventually twelve percent remained without education. Apart from that sixty-four percent had their primary schooling. It was a pathetic condition for educational achievements, the factors of hereditary employment, poor treatment in schooling, caste-based bias in society, and poor economic conditions were associated with the educational status.

A phenomenological study (2019) was conducted among women sanitary workers entitled 'lived reality of women sanitary workers in India', to explore the lives of women sanitary workers. A total number of 181 women sanitation workers across three cities participated as respondents. It shows that most of the respondents involve in the early marriage practice of their daughters instead of giving educational opportunities. Apart from that, they used their daughters in their sanitation work along with domestic household work. If the child did not have the interest to study, they just take them to their work. Here the parental attitude towards their children's education is very worst due to the orthodox ideologies as well as the social stratification impacts. They are the witness of generation illiterates in the decades.

DSBRS (2015) conducted a study on 'Socio-economic status of sanitary workers in Guntur and Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. The research reveals that nearly 10 percent of the respondents' children were school

dropouts. Due to financial problems, most of them discontinued from schools. Some of them were not interested in study so their parents took them to their sanitation work and do not force their children to study further.

Walters (2019) conducted a research entitled 'Parenting from a polluted margin' it stated that some sanitary workers do not want to enroll their children in schools, because they may get the chance to get discriminated in the name of the caste as well as parents working nature. So they just leave them in the capacity of illiterates or if they have the caliber to meet the external environment, they enroll them in government schools. They explained the past events that their children were being teased, victimized, and treated as inferior or in the form of untouchables in front of other children. But at the same time, some of the parents used to motivate their children, to achieve more in study and to get into the occupation on they like. Continuous stigmatization offers mixed attitudes among parents about their children's education.

Conclusion

Education is one of the ladders to the upliftment of individuals in all aspects. Thinking capacity, rational intellectuality, multitask involvement, and self-dignity are the outcomes of education. In this research, illiterate parents do not have any idea about the importance of education. Though some of them know the magnitude of education, the factors of social stigma, social hierarchy, the position of lower strata, and the nature of their work make them detached from the involvement of education. Despite being protected by constitutional safeguards, socially they are

away from the mainstream of education. Orthodox ideologies, affection for society, and hereditary occupation make them do the same sanitation work. The same ideology makes them away from an interest in education, it also passes through the generation. Parental lower social statuses are directly linked with poor awareness about education. It directly affects their children's future careers.

In contemporary days there are much of changes among vulnerable groups regarding education. The impact of globalization also provides a positive response about the role of education which supports economic security. Removal of social negligence and offering more supportive mechanisms related to education may have the chance to act as a promoter of sanitary workers' children's education.

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