JSL, 9(6), June 2024: 11- 22

Online ISSN: 2456-1495
CODEN (USA): JSLOBJ

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHEDULED CASTES IN THE GORAKHPUR REGION

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ABSTRACT

There are several ways to quantify a person's socio-economic status, including their income, education, occupation, housing, and access to essential amenities. Scheduled Caste people in the Gorakhpur region have social and economic issues, which are examined in this research. 225 members of the Scheduled Castes, participated in the primary data collection process by way of structured interviews. The results show that most people who took the survey work in seasonal or casual jobs, own very little property, and still encounter caste-based prejudice in many forms, especially in public, cultural, and social settings. The permanence of societal obstacles, even if several respondents did not report any unfavorable experiences. According to the chi-square test, there is no correlation between gender and caste-related difficulties. In order to tackle the systemic inequality that the Scheduled Castes in the Gorakhpur region face, the study stresses the ongoing importance of specific policy interventions and social inclusion initiatives.

Keywords: Caste, Occupation, Discrimination, Social, Property

Online ISSN: 2456-1495
CODEN (USA): JSLOBJ

I. INTRODUCTION

There is a great deal of diversity in Indian society, with individuals hailing from a wide range of castes and groups. Our study's overarching goal is to reveal the economic and social standing of the sample village's scheduled caste inhabitants so that the government may take their plight into consideration when making plans for the future. Castes are a dividing line in Indian society. The Varna System is the foundation of the caste system in India, with the Brahmins at the very top and the Vyasyas, Kshatriyas, and Sudras below them. Avarnas, Antajas, or Panchamas of Chandalas1 are the names given to those who do not fall within the varna system. The fact that they were compelled to remain outside the village settlement makes them external.

Classification as Scheduled Castes was based on the pollution stigmatization that was associated with them. In Indian society, there are around 3,743 different castes and sub-castes. There is a clear social and ceremonial hierarchy within the caste system, with the scheduled castes, sometimes known as the untouchables, at the very bottom. The previous caste system had imposed several disadvantages on these groups because of their poor social and ceremonial standing. Social inequality and exploitation have been ongoing problems for the Scheduled

Castes for as long as anybody can remember. All the advantages and privileges that the higher castes had enjoyed were taken away from them. Temples of the higher castes, public spaces, schools, etc., were off-limits to them. In order to make ends meet, those at the bottom of society had no choice except to engage in filthy, low-paying work. Scavenging, cobbling, corpse disposal, basketry, and other specialized traditional vocations were linked with them. This has meant that certain castes have lagged behind in politics, culture, education, economics, and social advancement for generations.

Following independence, the Constitution places an emphasis on social equality, which is equality regardless of gender, race, religion, or caste. Several social and political reform movements were initiated during the British period with the aim of empowering the weaker sections, particularly the scheduled castes. As a result, scheduled castes were granted job and educational reservations in an effort to attain social justice and equality. In response, the government of India has implemented a plethora of programs meant to improve the economic and social standing of the country's Dalit minority. For a long time, members of India's scheduled caste society have

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Online ISSN: 2456-1495
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struggled to advance economically and socially. The Indian government has not yet succeeded in improving the lives of these people, despite the fact that it has introduced several programs and projects in the years after independence.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mhadeshwar, Vishal & Kurlikar, Prashika. (2021) From ancient times onward, India's educational and occupational opportunities were severely limited, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds had a much harder time breaking through the educational glass ceiling. The scheduled and non-scheduled populations of India are drastically different in terms of educational possibilities and job prospects. The primary goal of this study is to compare and contrast the socio-economic characteristics of scheduled castes (scheduled tribes and scheduled castes) in India with those of non-scheduled population groups, specifically looking at their literacy and educational levels. Beyond this, the study also aims to determine if the socioeconomic position of SC and ST is improving or worsening. The aforementioned goal has been accomplished by the study by making use of census and NSSO data. From its inception in 1872 to the present day, the Indian Census has been the go-to for reliable statistics on a wide range of socio-cultural and demographic topics, including population characteristics, economic activity, literacy and education, housing and household amenities, and more. The results demonstrate that the SC and ST population is gradually improving in terms of education and employment, according to census and NSSO statistics. Development is ongoing, albeit progress is gradual. There is still a disparity between SC&ST and other categories, but it will close shortly thanks to well-executed government policies.

Das, Minakshi. (2021) In India, the Scheduled Castes are among the lowest-income demographics. People belonging to the Scheduled Castes are dispersed across the nation. They rely on the higher castes for their livelihood and are mostly found in rural regions. Most members of the scheduled castes work as bonded labourers or in low-paying manual labor. The majority of people from scheduled castes are either too proud or too ignorant to see the need of an education. They do not prioritize sending their children to college or other educational institutions. People from scheduled castes often face disadvantages such as poverty, illiteracy, a hostile social climate, and a general lack of knowledge. Scholarships for education, a variety of educational facilities, financial assistance and skill development to help launch a life, job reservations, educational reservations,

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Online ISSN: 2456-1495
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and special courts to handle cases of genocide and violence are all part of the government of India's special schemes to enable access to opportunities. They don't know their rights or how to improve their life, even though there are many educational programs and policies available to them. We must comprehend and evaluate the issues in light of their historical background, which plays a significant role in shaping their current manifestations. In this study, we look at the educational challenges faced by members of Biswanath Gaon Panchayat's scheduled caste.

Sardar, Sanjib. (2020) This research examines the socioeconomic history of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) people living in Tirol village, Arambagh, with a primary emphasis on identifying and assessing the key barriers to their socioeconomic progress. We have gathered the essential details using a carefully crafted questionnaire and backed them up with pertinent secondary sources of information. A comprehensive analysis was conducted on 287 representative households, and the results are shown in the table. The survey found that 88.88 percent of the sample population comes from the SCs group, with males making up 49.64 percent and women 50.36 percent. With the exception of the current generation, the SCs community's educational level in the study region is not great, and their degree of higher education is quite low. Even though there are more women than males, their literacy rate is far lower. Members of SCs do not get enough money each month. There is a high unemployment rate among SCs, and agriculture is the backbone of their economy. Their traditional dwelling is a mud hut, while the Indira Awas Yojana has funded the construction of a number of concrete homes for them. Overall, the results of this research show that the SC community is in a bad socioeconomic state, and that the government should prioritize addressing this backwardness and finding the necessary measures for sustainable growth.

Bhagavatheeswaran, Lalitha et al., (2016) In northern Karnataka, South India, this qualitative research looked at the factors that help and hinder scheduled caste/scheduled tribe (SC/ST) teenage females from enrolling in and finishing secondary school. Twenty-two teenage girls, together with their parents or guardians (n=22) and eleven educators, were selected at random from eleven villages in two districts in northern Karnataka to participate in in-depth interviews. At the individual, family, community, and school levels, there were many obstacles that underprivileged caste teenage girls faced while trying to enroll in and stay in school in this particular environment. Furthermore, a few factors that facilitate learning were also detailed. The research stresses the need to improve the quality of education in this context while simultaneously engaging many

Online ISSN: 2456-1495
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stakeholders to remove obstacles to education for SC/ST girls and to alter societal perceptions and expectations on gender roles.

Chakraborty, Sudipta. (2016) The primary goal of this research was to assess the socioeconomic status of a representative sample of Dibrugarh town's SC residents. This research made use of the normative survey approach. Respondents from the town of Dibrugarh were chosen using the accidental sampling approach in this research. The sample size is 250 people, with 138 men and 112 women drawn at random from the neighborhood. A total of 189 respondents call an urban region home, while 61 call a rural place their home. According to the results, most people who participated in the survey had poor socioeconomic level. When looking at the socioeconomic situation of the scheduled caste population, there was a notable variation between male and female respondents, as well as between urban and rural respondents. One of the most crucial factors in determining the respondents' socioeconomic class is their level of education. The development of the educational situation should, therefore, take precedence. If we want them to improve their socioeconomic situation and contribute to the nation's socioeconomic growth, we need to make sure they have a good academic environment at home and enough academic facilities.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design.

Sources of Data

Data for the research came from a variety of sources, some original and others secondary. Structured interviews were used to gather primary data. Sources cited in the secondary data set include official publications, books, academic journals, theses, district census handbooks, the Census of India, and other reputable online resources.

Sampling Technique

Respondents were chosen from the study's target group using a basic random sampling procedure.

Population and Sample

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Households belonging to the Scheduled Caste in the Gorakhpur area are the intended recipients. The research surveyed 225 people from various Scheduled Caste groups.

Statistical Technique

Frequency and percentages and chi square test was applied.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Gender of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Male	147	65.3
Female	78	34.7
Total	225	100

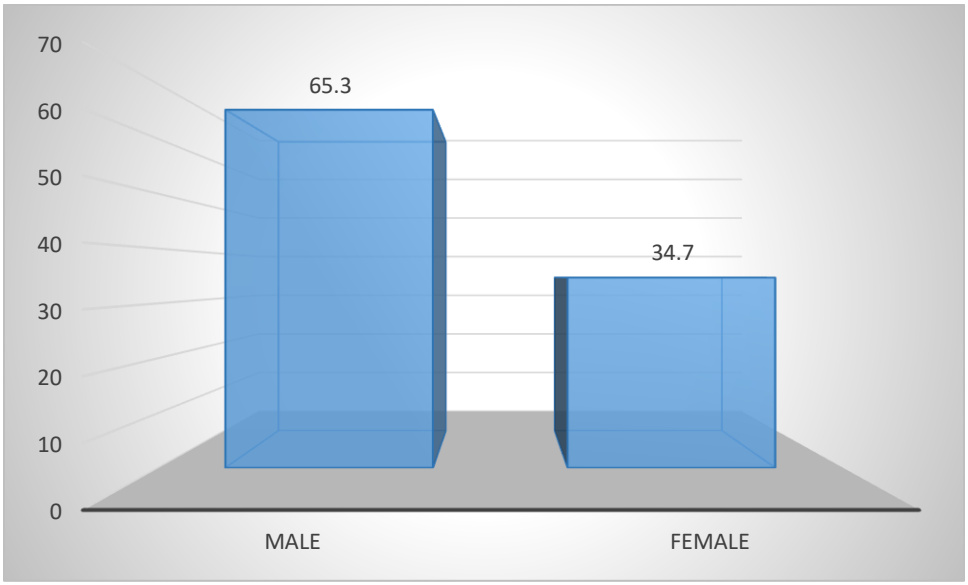

Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents

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According to the data in the table above, 147 respondents (65.3%) are men and 78 respondents (34.7%) are female.

Table 2: Occupation of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture	69	30.7
Industry/ Business	23	10.2
Service Sector/ Formal Employment	36	16.0
Seasonal/ Informal Sector employment/ Caste Based Occupations	97	43.1
Total	225	100

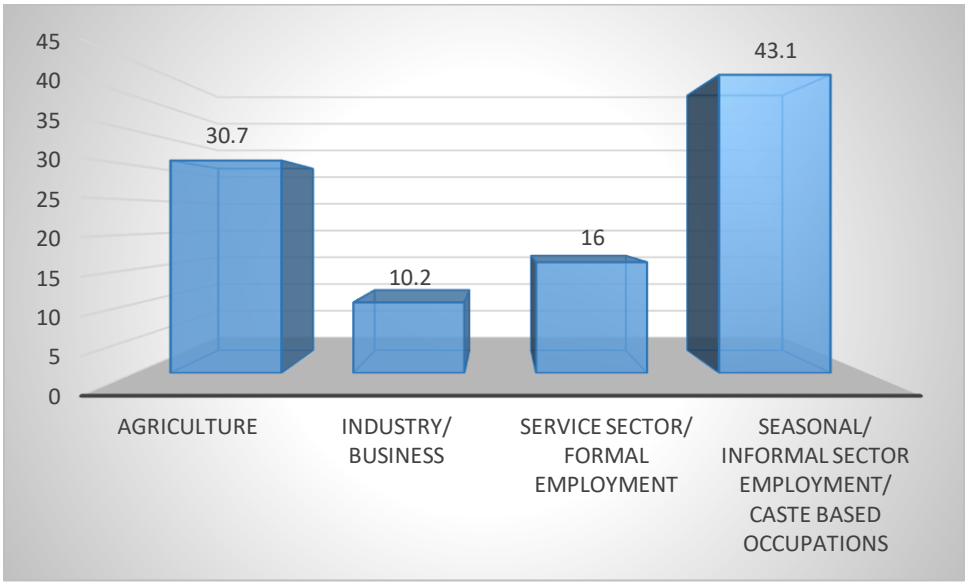

Figure 2: Occupation of the Respondents

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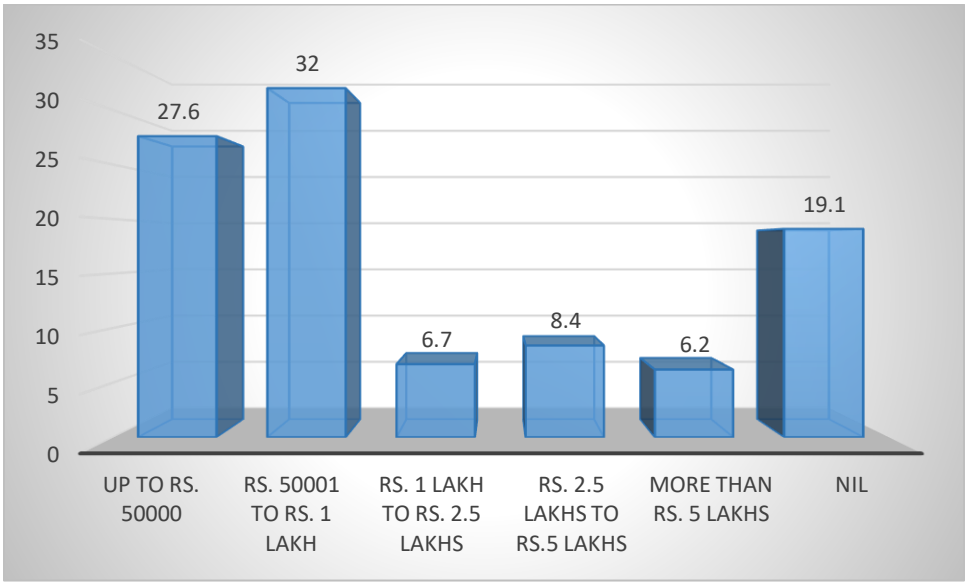
CODEN (USA): JSLOBJ

Based on their occupations, most of the respondents (43.1%) work in seasonal or informal jobs that are based on caste, while 30.7% work in agriculture, 16.0% work in the service sector or in formal employment, and 10.2% work in industry or business.

Table 3: Worth of Properties Owned by the respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Up to Rs. 50000	62	27.6
Rs. 50001 to Rs. 1 lakh	72	32.0
Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2.5 lakhs	15	6.7
Rs. 2.5 lakhs to Rs.5 lakhs	19	8.4
More than Rs. 5 lakhs	14	6.2
Nil	43	19.1
Total	225	100



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CODEN (USA): JSLOBJ

Figure 3: Worth of Properties Owned by the respondents

The following percentages of respondents had property holdings: 27.6% have holdings of up to Rs. 50,000, 32% of respondents have holdings of between Rs. 500,000 and 1,000,000, 30 6.7 percent have property holdings ranging from 1 to 2.5 lakhs to 5 lakhs, 6.2 percent have holdings over 5 lakhs, and 19.1 percent do not own any properties at all.

Table 4: Challenges Faced by Respondents Due to Caste-Based Discrimination

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Social Discrimination/ Alienation	64	28.5
Restrictions to Enter Public Places	28	12.4
Lower Treatment at Religious, Cultural and Public Functions	71	31.6
Atrocities from Forward Caste People	16	7.1
Not Faced Any Bad Situations	46	20.4
Total	225	100

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Online ISSN: 2456-1495
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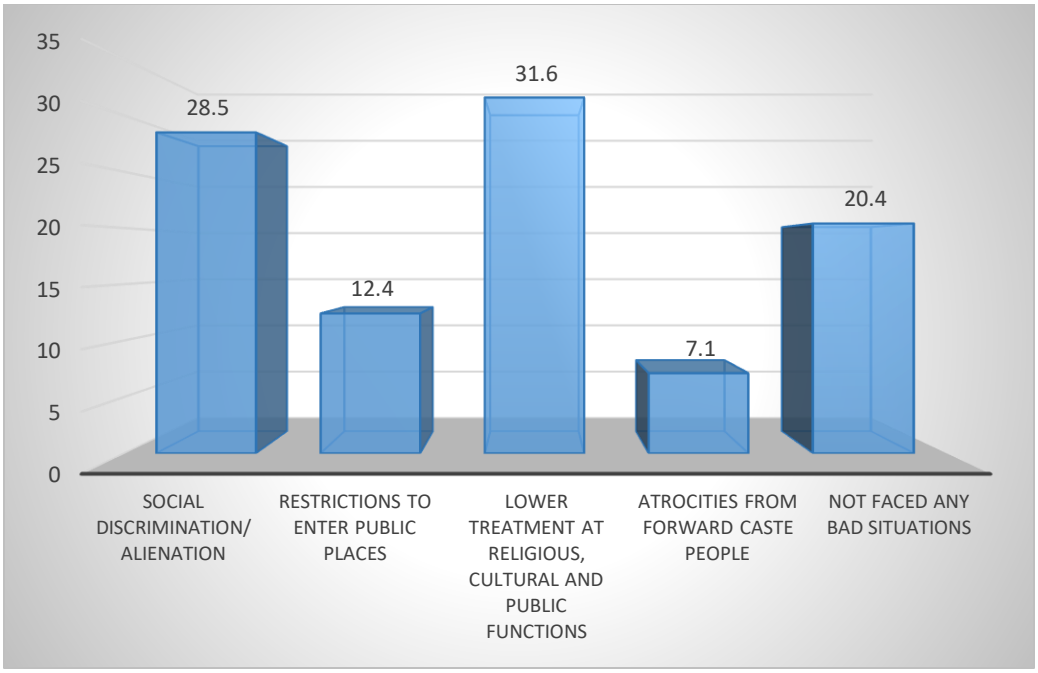

Figure 4: Challenges Faced by Respondents Due to Caste-Based Discrimination

Table 4 shows that out of 225 respondents, 64 (or 28.5%) reported experiencing social alienation or prejudice, while 28 (12.4%) reported having trouble getting into public spaces. Thirteen percent (71 people) said they were treated less kindly in public, cultural, and religious events. Victims of advance caste atrocities constituted 7.1% of the total (16 respondents). Among the notable figures, 20.4%, or 46 people, claimed to have never been in a terrible circumstance.

Table 5: Association between Gender and Faced Bad Situations

Variables	Chi-Square Value (χ^2)	p-value	Significance
Gender	5.84	0.212	Not Significant
Challenges faced Due to Caste-Based Discrimination			

Table 5 uses a chi-square test to look at how gender relates to the difficulties people experience because of caste prejudice. There is a higher degree of significance (more than the customary 0.05) in the computed chi-square value (5.84) and p-value (0.212). The outcome does not meet the criteria for statistical significance.

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V. CONCLUSION

Despite constitutional protections and welfare programs, the study found that Scheduled Caste people in the Gorakhpur region nevertheless face several social and economic obstacles. Extremely low levels of property ownership, high rates of reliance on informal and caste-based jobs, and pervasive social discrimination in public, cultural, and religious arenas are all symptoms of systemic inequality. Social hurdles including prejudice, exclusion, and uneven treatment continue to be dominating impediments to overall development, even if gender does not substantially impact the character of caste-based difficulties encountered. Evidence from this study highlights the need of raising public consciousness, removing barriers to stable employment, and enforcing anti-discrimination and welfare laws. In order to promote social justice, equity, and inclusive development among the Scheduled Castes in the region, it is vital to address these difficulties.

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