

LITERACY AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF SCHEDULED CASTE IN JHARKHAND

JIMMY GUPTA¹

¹Junior Research Fellow, University Department of Economics, Ranchi University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, INDIA

ABSTRACT

The scheduled castes (SC) population are relatively more illiterate and less educated than the general population in India, despite the constitution and government providing them with numerous social and economic safeguards. This study attempts to explore the current status of literacy and education among the scheduled castes population of Jharkhand along with the gender disparity in their literacy and education using the secondary data from Census and UDISE. The findings highlight that though there is an increasing trend in the literacy rate among the SC population, but a significant gender disparity is pronounced among the scheduled caste population in Jharkhand. However, on a positive note, the GER of girls is higher than the GER of boys at every level of schooling among scheduled castes. Simultaneously, the dropout rates increased sharply from primary to secondary schools. That reflects that a large number of SC students are not able to pursue higher education.

KEYWORDS: Scheduled castes, Literacy rates, Gender disparity, Education, Dropout.

INTRODUCTION

India is a nation with an extensive diversity of social communities, cultures, and faiths. Among the numerous distinct social groups, only a few privileged groups of society had all their rights, and a large section of Indian society suffered from their basic human rights. To reduce this inequality, after independence, the Indian Constitution declared certain castes as Scheduled Castes to create a system of affirmative action in employment and education for these castes (Medhe, 2018). The scheduled castes (SC) include approximately 201.4 million people, which constitute 16.6 percent of the total population of India. There are 1108 castes residing all over the India (Sahoo & Acharya, 2019). Scheduled castes have a major impact on the social, cultural, and economic development of Jharkhand state. The scheduled caste population in Jharkhand is 39.86 million constitute 12.08 percent of the total population of the state. Around 79.11 percent of the scheduled caste population lives in rural areas, whereas 20.89 percent of the population lives in urban areas. Scheduled castes continue to be considered the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups in society. Earlier, they were typically regarded as slaves, outcasts, or untouchables. Their income, health, social standing, and education are all low compared with other social groups in India. The scheduled caste population are mostly from rural areas and primarily work as agricultural labourers, tenants, and farmers on small scales. They worked as hunters, tanning, and sweepers. Additionally, the bulk of them work in micro-occupations such as drummers, carpenters, ironsmiths, leather

workers, weavers, fisherman, basket/rope makers, washermen, artists, fruit and vegetable vendors, shoemakers, liquor manufacturers, and some others (Raghavendra R. H., 2020).

Literacy and educational attainment are the key indicators of the social and economic development of any community or social group. Education plays a crucial role in enhancing an individual's abilities, empowering them with the necessary resources to overcome life challenges, and securing social and financial security. Educational attainment and literacy levels are important measures for the progress of society. The level of literacy and education of any community or group reflects the socioeconomic status of the population of that community in any region, state, or country to a great extent. Despite this, in a society in which the literacy rate is high, the standard of living of that community will be high and they will get the right to live a respectable life in society. Therefore, to improve the standard of living of any backward community or group and their right to live a respectable life, they must be educated as much as possible because only an educated person can be conscious and aware of their rights and can face obstacles in their lives.

Some studies have focused on the literacy and educational status of the scheduled caste population in India and different states of India. The present study refers to numerous studies to illuminate its significance of the present study. The scheduled castes are relatively illiterate and less educated than the general population, despite the constitution and government providing them with numerous social and economic safeguards.

Early marriage, child labor, social restrictions, the dominance of upper castes, illiteracy among women as a result of PREFERENCES for males, and low socioeconomic status are only a few of the numerous possible causes of this (Chouhan, 2013). Scheduled caste population have inadequate access to the resources and education. The main causes of the low literacy rates among the scheduled castes include inadequate infrastructure and resources, women's secondary status, and students who are forced to drop out of school because of poverty (Pinki, 2022). Acharya & Sahoo (2019) have attempted to explore the changing trends in literacy among the scheduled castes to find out the determinants of higher education and the major reasons for never enrolling in educational institutions or dropping out of studies among the SC population in India. According to this study, there is an increasing trend in literacy rates among the scheduled caste population, but the rates are well below the national average. Gender disparity in literacy is quite pronounced. The low level of higher education is mainly due to reasons such as failure in examinations, large number of dropouts and stagnation caused by their poor socio-economic background. Kumar et al., (2022) presented a brief picture of educational attainment, literacy and health status of scheduled castes students in Jammu and Kashmir. The study concluded that scheduled castes are backward in many human development parameters including literacy, health and access to health care. They are at the bottom of social indices like educational attainment, literacy rate and health in Doda, Jammu and Kashmir and India. They are exploited in every field economically, socially and mentally. Keeping this in mind, the Indian government has taken affirmative action and made constitutional provisions to help them. Many policies and activities implemented have given significant results in various fields, resulting in improved living standards of this marginalized population. The present study attempts to explore the current status of literacy and education among the scheduled castes population of Jharkhand along with the gender disparity in their literacy and education using the secondary data from Census and UDISE.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study explores the status of literacy rates and education among scheduled castes in Jharkhand. The article critically sets the following objectives:

- To study and analyze the literacy rates and gender disparity in literacy among the scheduled castes population in Jharkhand.
- To study and analyze the status of GER at various educational level among the scheduled castes population in Jharkhand.

- To study and analyze the status of dropout rates at various educational level among the scheduled castes population in Jharkhand.

DATA AND METHODS

This study was based on secondary data. Secondary data have been collected from various sources, such as the Census of India, 2011 and UDISE+ 2021-22. Data on the population of scheduled castes and literacy rates were collected from the Census tables, 2011. Gender disparity in literacy was examined using the Gender Disparity Index. The Gender Disparity Index (GDI) measures the female-male literacy ratio on a scale ranging from 0.000 to 1.000. A lower score on a scale from 0.000 to 1.000 indicates higher gender disparity; conversely, a higher score indicates less gender disparity (Bengal & Ghosh, 2007). Information on gross enrolment ratio and dropout rates for scheduled castes at different levels of schooling was obtained from the reports published by the UDISE, 2021-22. Simple descriptive statistical tools of research methods, such as tables, percentages, and charts, have been used for analyzing and representing data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SCHEDULED CASTES POPULATION AND OVERALL POPULATION OF JHARKHAND

The Scheduled Castes of India are spread across 31 states and union territories. The total population of scheduled castes in India is around 200 million, represent a sizeable portion of the population, yet since Christian and Muslim Dalits are not listed as scheduled castes, the actual, if unofficial, number of scheduled castes in the nation is most likely far greater (Raghavendra, 2020). Table 1 shows the population of scheduled castes and overall population of Jharkhand, and percentages of SC population in overall population of Jharkhand. As per the 2011 census, total scheduled caste population is 39.86 lakh. Out of total scheduled caste population, 79.11 percent of SCs are living in rural areas and 20.89 percent of SCs are living in urban areas. Scheduled castes constitute 12.08 percent of the total population of the state.

Table 1: Comparison of scheduled castes population and total population in Jharkhand

Indicators	Scheduled castes			Overall			Percentage of SC population in Total Population
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	
Total	39.86	20.43	19.42	329.88	169.30	160.58	12.08
Rural	31.56	16.1	15.4	250.66	127.7	122.79	12.58
Urban	8.33	4.31	4.02	79.33	41.54	37.79	10.50

Source: Census of India, 2011

Out of total rural population 12.58 percent are scheduled castes living in rural areas and out of the total urban population, 10.50 percent are scheduled castes living in urban areas. Figure 1 shows the total population, schedule caste population and proportion of schedule caste population in the total population in Jharkhand state. The total population of Jharkhand has increased from 11.69 million in year 1961 to 32.99 million in year 2011. The schedule castes population has almost tripled from 1.03 million in census year 1961 to 3.99 million in 2011, reflecting a consistent growth in the schedule castes population over the decades. The proportion of schedule castes in the total population has also seen an increase, although at a slower pace. It was 8.9 percent in 1961, then increased to 9.7 percent in 1971, 11.7 percent in 1981, 11.9 percent in 1991, 11.8 percent in 2001 and finally to 12.1 percent in 2011.

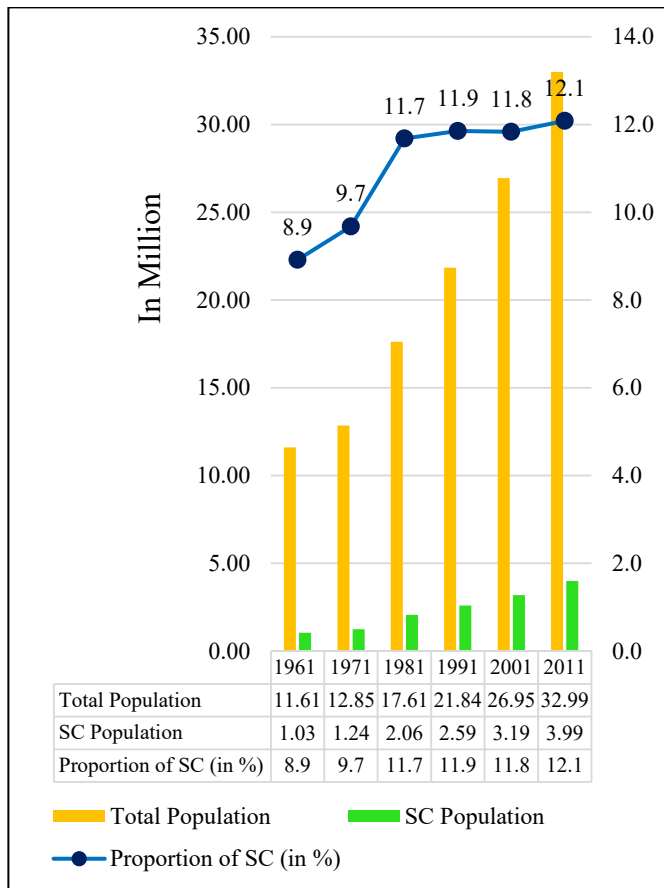
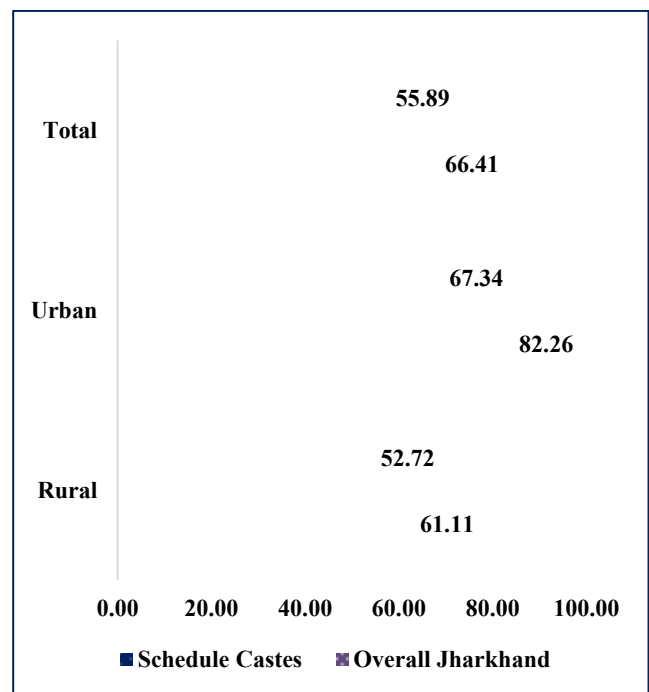


Figure 1: Trend of Total Population, Schedule castes population and proportion of SC Population in Total Population in Jharkhand; Source: Census of India.

LITERACY RATES AMONG SCHEDULED CASTES IN JHARKHAND

One important indicator for evaluating the level of human development in a community is the literacy rate. The advancement and development of a nation is largely influenced by the quality and characteristics of the education provided to its population (**Gupta, 2021**). The literacy rate among scheduled castes was lower than that of total literacy. There is a 10 percent gap between the literacy rate of scheduled castes and Jharkhand's total literacy rate. The literacy rates among the total population are higher than those among scheduled castes in urban and rural areas by 22.16 percent and 15.91%, respectively.

Figure 2: Literacy Rates among Scheduled Castes in Jharkhand; Source: Census of India, 2011



The female literacy rates among scheduled castes are lower than those of male literature in both rural and urban areas. The data shown in Table I indicate that there is a significant gender gap in literacy among the scheduled caste population as well as the total population of Jharkhand. The total female literacy rate was 55.42 percent, the total male literacy rate was 76.84 percent, and the gender gap in literacy was 21 percent among the total population of Jharkhand. The female literacy rate among scheduled castes was 44.20 percent, the male literacy rate among scheduled castes was 66.94 percent, and the gender gap was 23 percent in literacy among the scheduled caste population in Jharkhand.

Table I: Literacy rates among scheduled castes in Jharkhand (for 7 years and above)

Category	Jharkhand (Overall)				Jharkhand (Scheduled castes)			
	Persons	Males	Females	GDI	Persons	Males	Females	GDI
Rural	61.11	72.86	48.91	0.671	52.72	64.05	40.78	0.637
Urban	82.26	88.44	75.47	0.853	67.34	77.25	56.68	0.734
Total	66.41	76.84	55.42	0.721	55.89	66.94	44.20	0.660

Source: Census of India, 2011

The female literacy rates among scheduled castes were lower than the female literacy rate among the total population in both rural and urban areas. Simultaneously, the female literacy rate was highest in urban areas with the lowest gender disparity (0.853). The gender disparity in literacy is less in urban areas than in rural areas for scheduled caste populations, as well as for the total population. Scheduled castes had a lower GDI (0.660) than GDI for the total population (0.721), which indicates that gender disparity is wider among scheduled castes. The data also indicate that higher female literacy leads to lower gender disparity.

GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO AND ENROLMENT RATIO AND DROPOUT RATES AMONG SCHEDULED CASTES IN JHARKHAND

“The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) compares the enrolment in a specific level of education to the population of the age-group which is most age-appropriate for that level of education” (UNIFIED DISTRICT INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION, 2021). The GER of scheduled castes (109.3 percent) is higher than the state GER (102.3 percent) at primary schooling, which sharply decreased to 42.6 percent at higher secondary schooling.

Table II: Gross enrolment ratio of scheduled castes in Jharkhand, in 2021-2022

Educational Level	Scheduled Castes			Jharkhand (Overall)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary	108.1	110.7	109.3	101.7	103.1	102.3
Upper Primary	95.4	99.8	97.6	88.0	89.8	88.9
Secondary	65	72.7	68.7	66.4	70.5	68.4
Higher Secondary	39.5	45.9	42.6	44.9	48.0	46.4

Source: UDISE+ 2021-22

The GER was 110.7 percent for SC girls and 108.1 percent for SC boys at primary school, which decreased to 45.9 percent for SC girls and 39.5 percent for SC boys at higher secondary school. However, the gross enrolment ratio of girls was higher than that of boys among scheduled castes at each level of schooling. Table III presents the dropout rates among scheduled castes and the total population of Jharkhand in 2021-22. Administrative issues and socioeconomic circumstances are the major causes of student dropout. Many students drop out of school because of inadequate facilities, lack of training, and lack of capacity in administration and regulation. Many children attend school irregularly before dropping out, taking temporary leaves, and many of them work as child labourers (Baa, 2024).

Table III: Dropout rates among scheduled castes in Jharkhand, in 2021-2022

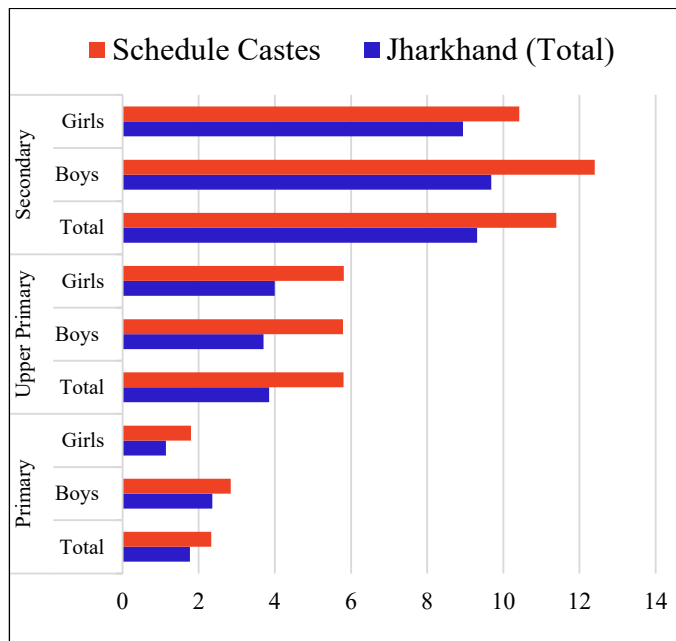
Level of Schooling	Primary			Upper Primary			Secondary		
	To tal	Bo y	Gi rl	To tal	Bo y	Gi rl	To tal	Bo y	Gi rl
Jharkhand (Total)	1.7	2.	1.	3.85	3.	4	9.3	9.	8.9
Scheduled Castes	7	36	14	7	1	68	4	12	10.
	2.3	2.	1.	5.8	5.	5.	11.	12	10.
	3	84	8	79	81	39	.4	42	

Source: UDISE+ 2021-22

The dropout rates for both boys and girls increased significantly with the increase in their educational levels. The dropout rates for both SC boys and girls were higher than the state dropout rates for boys and girls. Among the scheduled castes in Jharkhand, 1.8 percent of the female children and 2.84 percent of the male children belonging to the primary school dropped out of school without completing their education. In secondary schooling, the dropout rates of female and male children among scheduled castes increased to 10.42 percent and 12.4 percent respectively.

The dropout rates for scheduled castes in Jharkhand were higher than the overall dropout rates of the state at each level of education, as shown in figure 2. As the educational level increased, the gap in dropout rates among total students and scheduled caste students widened. This indicates that children among scheduled castes are continuously dropping out of their education. These children face many difficulties on a day-to-day basis, which leads them to eventually give in to situational pressure that they cannot handle for a very long time and quitting school (Pandita, 2015).

Figure 2: Dropout rates among Scheduled Castes in Jharkhand;
Source: UDISE+ 2021-22



CONCLUSION

The scheduled castes continue to be considered the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups in society. They had inadequate access to resources and education. The level of literacy and education of any community or group reflects the socio-economic status of the population of that community in any region, state or country to a great extent. The female literacy rates among scheduled castes are lower as compared to male literacy in both rural and urban area. The gender disparity in literacy is less in urban areas in comparison to rural areas for scheduled castes population as well as for total population. One significant aspect of gender inequality is the gender gap in literacy and education, which is influenced by socio-cultural and economic variables. Although, the gross enrolment ratio of girls is higher compared to gross enrolment ratio of boys among scheduled castes at each level of schooling. The dropout rates for scheduled castes in Jharkhand were higher than the overall dropout rates of the state at each level of education. Many SC students drop out of school because of inadequate facilities, lack of training, and lack of administrative and regulatory capacity. The dropout rates for both boys and girls increase significantly with the increase in their educational levels.

Education enables disadvantaged individuals to soar and achieve their goals. Education is the most effective instrument available to the public to enact social justice or other

reforms. It is undeniable that, despite the Indian government's considerable efforts, there has not been any notable change at the grassroots level that would indicate the advancement of underprivileged groups like scheduled castes. What needs to be ensured is that the education levels of the children of scheduled castes are raised, and every effort must be made to keep them enrolled in school.

REFERENCES:

- Acharya, S., & Sahoo, H. (2019). Education among scheduled caste population in India. *Indonesian Journal of Geography*, 51(3), 393–405. <https://doi.org/10.22146/ijg.43192>
- Baa, S. (2024). Problem of Drop out among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India: An analysis on the basis of Secondary Data. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, 13(4), 1006–1016. <https://doi.org/10.21275/sr24215132111>
- Bengal, W., & Ghosh, A. K. (2007). The Gender Gap in Literacy and Education among the Scheduled Tribes in Jharkhand and West Bengal. In *Bulletin* (Vol. 56, Issue 1). <https://about.jstor.org/terms>
- Chouhan, P. (2013). A study on literacy and educational attainment of scheduled castes population in Maldah District of West Bengal, India. *Journal of Geography and Regional Planning*, 6(1), 19–30. <https://doi.org/10.5897/JGRP12.028>
- Gupta, R. (2021). *SCENARIO OF LITERACY IN JHARKHAND WITH SPECIAL REFERENCES TO SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379074027>
- Kumar, B., Geelani, S. Z. A., & Bhat, G. J. (2022). Educational Attainment, Literacy and Health Status of Scheduled Caste Students in Jammu and Kashmir. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455328X221108028>
- Medhe, R. S. (2018). EduIndex Impact Factor 5. 18 *UGC Approved Journal*, 48178, 48818. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.19027.89127>
- Pandita, R. (2015). Dropout Percentage of Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe Children in India: A Decadal Analysis up to Secondary level. *Journal of Indian Education* 0972-5628, 41.
- Pinki. (2022). EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN IN PUNJAB AND HARYANA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS. In *Modern*

Management, Applied Science & Social Science (IJEMMASS) (Vol. 882, Issue 02).

- Raghavendra R. H. (2020). Literacy and Health Status of Scheduled Castes in India. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, 12(1), 97–110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455328X19898449>
- Raghavendra, R. H. (2020). Literacy and Health Status of Scheduled Castes in India. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, 12(1), 97–110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455328X19898449>
- Sahoo, H., & Acharya, S. (2019). Education among Scheduled Caste Population in India. *Indonesian Journal of Geography*, 51(3), 393. <https://doi.org/10.22146/ijg.43192>
- UNIFIED DISTRICT INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION. (2021).