

“Parents’ Attitude and Perception towards Primary Education in Rural Karnataka”

Dinesh N.A.¹, Dr. Chandrashekar.E²

Abstract: *The present study was aimed at assessing attitude of parents towards the education and schooling of their children. The study analyzed the data from 145 parents, who had one or more than one school going children. Out of these, 116 parents belonged to tribal families and 29 families belonged to non - tribal families. The age range of the sample was 25 - 35 years, and they all belonged to channageri taluk of Davanagere district in Karnataka consisting tribal population. A 23-item questionnaire was used for collecting data along with personal interview. The respondents were required to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each of the statements about children's education in a four - point Likert type scale, where 1 denotes strong disagreement and 4 denotes strong agreement. Mean scores were calculated separately for tribal. And non - tribal samples, and for male and female respondents. The 't' test was used to examine the significance of difference between tribal and non - tribal communities as well as across gender with regard to their attitude towards children's schooling and education . The findings showed that the overall attitude of the respondents was moderately favorable and positive towards schooling and education of their children. The results also indicated that there was no significant difference in the attitude of tribal and non - tribal parents. Gender difference was also found to be non - significant. The difference between tribal and non - tribal respondents was evident in their future plans to provide facilities for higher studies for their children. The study suggested that, although government endeavors at universalizing education has resulted in creating mass awareness and positive response towards schooling and education, there is a lot of scope for improvement in this regard. Future implications of the present study for policy formulation as well as for further research were pointed out.*

I. Introduction

Education is the doorway to the wider world and an exposition on rural infrastructure is incomplete without an assessment of the extent to which we have been able to open this door for the children of rural India. The constitution of India was framed in 1950 with an objective to guarantee social, political and economic justice to all irrespective of caste, creed and religion. It was well visualized that, development in education along with other allied sectors would play a vital role in bringing about desirable changes in the country. It was planned that the backward sections of the Indian population i.e. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes must be provided opportunity in education to develop critical thinking and self determination and contribute to the progress of the Country. These promises laid the foundation for the attempt of universalization of primary Education in India. In 1950, target was set to universalize primary education among the entire eligible category of children within the age group of 6-14 years of age within a span of 10 years. During that period a great deal of expansion in education facilities was achieved. However, universalization was still a distant dream. In April 2010, universal, free and compulsory education, was stated as the 8th Fundamental Right and according to it, throughout the country children under the age group of 6 to 14 would receive free and compulsory education. India is considered as the 135th country imparting free and compulsory education within the age group of six to fourteen years.

Parental Attitude and Involvement in children's Education

Family involvement is the strongest predictor of child educational outcomes. This dimension associated significantly with children's motivation to learn, attention, task persistence, receptive vocabulary skills, and low conduct problems. Family involvement in education has been identified as a beneficial factor in young children's learning (National Research Council [NRC], 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2000). It is, therefore, a key component of national educational policies and early childhood programs. Much of the research on parent involvement, as it relates to children's outcomes, has emphasized the relationship between specific parent involvement behaviors and children's achievement. Parental involvement at school (e.g., with school activities, direct communication with teachers and administrators) is associated with greater achievement in mathematics and reading (Griffith, 1996; Reynolds, 1992; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Higher levels of parent involvement in their children's educational experiences at home (e.g., supervision and monitoring, daily conversations about school) have been associated with children's higher achievement scores in reading and writing, as well as higher report card grades (Epstein, 1991; Griffith, 1996; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Keith et al., 1998). Other research

has shown that parental beliefs and expectations about their children's learning are strongly related to children's beliefs about their own competencies, as well as their achievement (Galper, Wigfield, & Seefeldt, 1997). Parents who evidenced high levels of school contact (volunteering in the classroom, participating in educational workshops, attending Policy Council meetings) had children who demonstrated greater social competency than children of parents with lower levels of school contact (Parker et al., 1997). It was hypothesized that home-based involvement would be most strongly associated with positive classroom learning outcomes and that direct school-based involvement would predict lower levels of conduct problems. Home-Based Involvement activities, such as reading to a child at home, providing a place for educational activities, and asking a child about school, evidenced the strongest relationships to later preschool classroom competencies. These activities were related to children's approaches to learning, especially motivation and attention/persistence, and were found to relate positively to receptive vocabulary.

The attitude of the parents signifies that the supporting nature of family in their children's education. The parental attitude can be negative or positive. The negative attitude of the parents regarding education and schooling can prevent their children from getting education. With less parental support in school work, low level of motivation and poor self-esteem of children can result. Positive attitude of the parents can be beneficial to their children in many cases and can be reflected in improvement in class performance, creating interest among children to learn, and higher achievement scores in reading and writing.

The growing awareness regarding education makes many families value their children's education and act favorably towards schooling and education of their children. They become a part of the decision making process of school, and decide their children's future regarding higher education. Therefore, it is imperative to assess the degree of favorableness of attitude in tribal communities so as to estimate the success of awareness programmes and endeavors with regard to “Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan” or universal elementary education.

II. Review Of Literature

Bogunović Blanka and Polovina Nada (2007) found in a study that the family stimulation is the resultant of the influence of cultural and educational profile of the family and active parental attitudes regarding education and attainment of their children. They examined the students' attitudes towards schooling, and to obtain answers to the question: which stimulating aspects of family context are the most predictable for the development of educational aspirations, i.e. attitudes towards school and gaining knowledge, educational interests and plans for further education. The sample consisted of 1,464 eighth-grade sample students, aged 15, from 34 primary schools in Serbia. The data were collected by the use of questionnaires filled in by the students and school principals. The results indicated a trend of interrelatedness of cognitively and educationally favorable conditions within the family and positive attitudes towards school, attainment, high aspirations and cognitive and intellectual interests for out-of-school activities.

Sen, (1992) in his study found that the cultural factors may play an intermediate role. They influence the choices made by individuals, through their own attitudes, and those of the people in their close environment. With respect to culture, India is part of what Caldwell (1982) has called the belt of classical patriarchy that stretches from North Africa to China and includes both Muslim, Hindu and Confucian cultures. His result indicated that the cultural factors show that belonging to a disadvantaged caste or tribe is negatively associated with schooling. Girls belonging to a scheduled caste are less in school in rural areas and girls belonging to a scheduled tribe are less in school in urban areas. The odds of being in school are also significantly reduced for children whose mothers had their first child at a young age and for children whose mothers have a preference for boys over girls. The percentage of women compared to men in the age group 20–59 is positively related to the odds of being in school in rural areas, thus his result indicated that in districts with less “missing women” the chances of children being in school are higher. From the above literature it can be assumed that the education of a child is determined by several factors. So the review can be categorized into different sub parts as given below for better understating.

Review of Studies on Attitude of Parents and Impact on Education:

TNS Social research (September 2003-June 2004) stated that parents' attitudes towards education were generally very positive. The majority (97%) agreed that a good education would help their child to get ahead in life. While 93% thought the qualifications were important to their child's future, 90% also agreed that children learn important life skills at school. Three quarters of parents (76%) agreed that their child's school is good at communicating with them and the majority (86%) agreed that their child's teachers do a great job. Just over a fifth (22%) felt that their child's school tended to be too interested in bright children at the expense of the others, although only 7% thought that the school takes too much interest in their child's home life. Just under a fifth of parents/carers (18%) thought that most of the things their child learns at school are not relevant to real life. A small proportion (14%) of parents saw it as acceptable that if their child did not want to study now, s/he could study when s/he was older. Their study was based on to identify whether there were any differences in parents'

attitudes towards attendance between the general population and a group of parents whose children were currently not attending school. This research has not identified any differences in the attitudes of parents in the general population.

Research indicates that most parents show considerable interest in their child’s school, and this is equally the case for parents of children who have attendance problems. In an Ofsted report (2001) on attendance and behaviour in secondary schools, it has been found (O’Keefe, 1993) that most schools usually enjoyed good working relationships with parents. In fact, most of the parents/carers said they wanted more contact with schools. The majority of parents were appreciative of the concern and time given by head teachers and staff, even when approached about issues concerning their children’s attendance or behaviour. However, it was also found that a small proportion of parents/carers were very uncooperative with the schools, and their attitudes, whether confrontational or passive, served to reinforce their children’s negative attitude towards school.

In a study of attitude to school attendance in seven Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England, it was found that most parents/carers believed that children who did not attend school regularly would underperform in school work, and that it was necessary for young people to get qualifications. However, the findings also indicated that parents/carers of children who truant tended to hold different attitudes from parents of children who do not have problems with attendance. Fewer parents/carers of children with school attendance problems believed that pupils who did not attend regularly would do badly in their schoolwork, and similarly, a smaller proportion of these parents/carers believed that young people needed qualifications. This group was also less likely to think that their children’s safety was at risk if they were not at school, and were less likely to believe that regular school attendance was important. There were also statistically significant differences between the views of both sets of parents with regard to when children should miss school, with a significantly higher proportion of parents of children with attendance problems agreeing that children should miss school to see the doctor, the dentist, or to help out at home.

III. Review Of Studies On Parental Involvement In Education:

Research illustrating the importance of parent involvement for the school success of adolescents spans nearly two decades. Duncan (1969), for example, compared the attendance, achievement, and drop-out rate of two junior high classes. In one class, students’ parents had individual meetings with counsellors before their children entered junior high school. In the other class, students’ parents did not meet with counsellors. After three years, students whose parents had met individually with the school counsellors had significantly higher attendance, better grade point averages, and lower drop-out rates.

Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990) also found that schools play a central role in determining levels of parent involvement in students’ learning. In a study of six high schools in California and Arizona that were providing an environment in which language minority students and others achieve academic success, the authors found that the schools actively encouraged parent involvement. Through newsletters, parent advisory committees, parent nights, and student-parent-teacher conferences, the high schools fostered families’ active participation in their teens’ education.

Dornbusch and Ritter (1988) studied the effects of parent involvement in high school activities on student outcomes. The study was based on questionnaire data from students, parents, and teachers at six San Francisco Bay Area high schools. The authors found that regardless of educational background, adolescents whose parents attended school functions received higher grades than adolescents whose parents did not. The authors also found that the lowest levels of family involvement in school programs and processes were among the parents of average students, minority students, students in step-families, and students in single-parent households. It was concluded that without interventions designed to encourage greater family involvement in these subgroups, educational and economic inequalities will persist for many poor, minority students.

Researchers must also consider race as an actor when studying parental involvement in education. Hill et al. (2004) indicate that the race of the parent(s) impacts parental involvement in education. In particular, African Americans have stronger parental involvement than European Americans (Hill et al., 2004). However, some research has found the opposite to be true (c.f. Seyfried & Chung, 2002). Others, like Hill and Tyson (2009), state that it is unclear whether or not parental involvement varies across race/ethnicity. This proposed study aims to clarify this.

A study conducted by (George, 1995).Search Institute found that four practices of parental involvement discussions about homework, discussions about school and school work, helping with homework, and attending school meetings and events decline significantly between grades six and twelve. The study revealed that by the junior or senior year in high school relatively few adolescents have parents who maintain an active interest in their education.

It has been emphasised that (National Research Council [NRC], 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2000) the family involvement is the strongest predictor of child outcomes. This dimension associated significantly with children's motivation to learn, kept attention, task 21 persistence, receptive vocabulary skills,

and low conduct problems. Family involvement in education has been identified as a beneficial factor in young children's learning.

IV. Significance Of The Study And Statement Of The Problem

The 21st centuries’ growth in various sectors has led our country towards achieving the distinction of one of the growing nations in the world. Various efforts have been made by the Government as well as Non Government Organizations but the literacy rate is increased if we compare it with the few decades back, but the cent percent literacy is not achieved till today. The literacy rate of the disadvantaged community is still poor.

In Karnataka, in spite of the various constitutional safeguards and all the different schemes by the state government, literacy level of the rural and disadvantaged mass is found to be much lower than that of the rest of the society. This may be caused by the various factors. Among these factors, socio-economic statuses, parental attitude, their interest to give education to their children, their awareness regarding education and so on play a vital role. While parents of the disadvantaged children are not highly in favor of schooling and education of their children, today’s scenario might have improved with widespread awareness regarding value of education. In this context, it is imperative to evaluate the perceptions and attitude of these parents.

The present study aims to examine whether the tribal parents, today, exhibit a positive and favorable attitude towards their children’s education as a result of increasing awareness of values of education through Government endeavors and initiatives.

V. Objectives Of The Study

The study broadly examines the attitude of the parents towards education in rural households of Channageri taluk of Davanagere district consisting of tribal population. The specific objectives are as under:

- To examine the attitudes of parents towards schooling and education of their children.
- To compare the parents belonging to tribal and non-tribal communities with regard to their attitude towards children’s schooling and education.
- To examine whether there exists a significant gender difference in attitudes of parents towards children’s education.
- To examine the future planning and aspirations of the parents with regard to their child’s education.

The sample for the study consisted of residents of Channageri taluk Santhebenour Panchayat of Davanagere district. This village consists of three hamlets. The data was collected from the 145 respondents (116 tribal and 29 non-tribal) from 185 households in this village. The total number of the male respondents was 51 and that of female was 94. The respondents were parents who had one or more than one school going children. They belonged to the age range of 25-35 years.

The data was collected through a questionnaire consisting of 23 statements, all pertaining to schooling and education of children (please see Appendix). Equal numbers of positive and negative statements were included in the questionnaire. The respondents were asked to rate each of the statements on a four-point Likert scale (where 1 denotes strongly disagree, 2 denotes disagree, 3 denotes agree and 4 denotes strongly agree). These 23 statements in the questionnaire were finalized after a thorough review of literature and all the statements reflected the value of schooling and education for a child’s future.

VI. Results And Discussion

Parental Attitude towards Education

Results indicated that the mean score of the total sample was not quite high (66.83) since the maximum score for the scale is 92 and minimum is 23. The mean score indicated that the attitude of the respondents cannot be termed as highly favorable, though it is not unfavorable either. The responses indicated that, in spite of the government’s endeavors in providing free education to all, the attitude of the respondents was not found to be highly favorable.

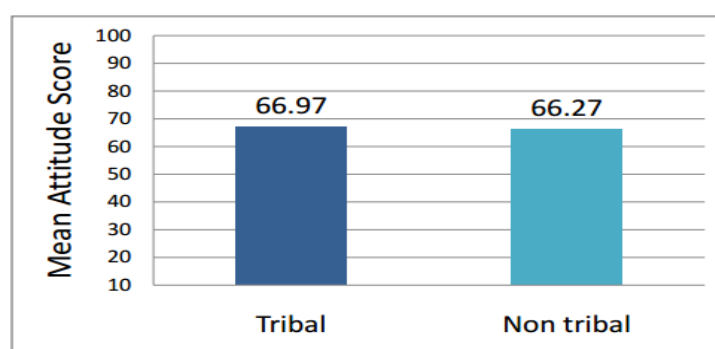
Results supported the earlier studies (Evangelista de Carvalho Filho, 2008; Mingat, 2007; Shavit & Blossfeld, 1993; Jencks, 1972; Coleman et al., 1966) that low socio-economic status can adversely affect the attitude towards schooling and education. However, the moderately favorable and not-so-unfavorable attitude found in the study throws light on the fact that growing awareness regarding literacy and education around the country has significantly affected all sections of the society including the tribal population. The value attached to schooling and education of children has substantially improved than earlier times when lack of literacy and education was the norm and sending children to school in a tribal community was an exception. Engagement of children in traditional occupation was considered to be more lucrative by the parents as it contributed to the family income; whereas education was considered as wastage of time and money since its outcome was uncertain and unimportant.

The reason behind the not-so- favorable attitude towards schooling among the respondents might be due to their low socio-economic status and parent’s labor market position. The respondents were mostly poor with average income per month ranging from Rs 3000/- to 4000/- and their main livelihood was based on agriculture and non- agricultural labor. They had little knowledge about facilities of the urban and developed environment. Their existing environment might have created a narrow mentality towards schooling where they fail to perceive a direct relationship between their children’s education and a better future. The second aspect is the father’s labor market position. Fathers who are in salaried employment are expected to be more aware of the importance of education and hence are more likely to invest in their children’s education than people in dependent employment since their thrust is to feed for their families rather than providing education to their children.

Comparison of Attitude of Tribal and Non-Tribal Parents

Table 1: Mean Scores of Tribal and Non-Tribal Groups

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Significance
Tribal	116	66.97	7.12	0.29	143	p>.05
Non-tribal	29	66.27	7.59			



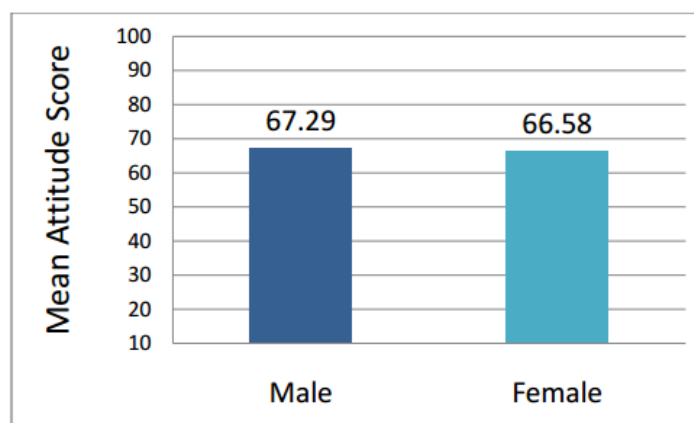
To compare the attitude of tribal and the non- tribal parents, mean scores of these two groups were found out separately. The ‘t’ test was employed to find out whether tribal differed significantly from non tribal in their attitude towards schooling .The results indicated that there was no significant difference between tribal and non-tribal parent’s attitude towards schooling. This indicates that similar living conditions, uniform local facilities for daily living such as housing, water, sanitation, provision for schooling etc shared by the tribal and the non-tribal in the village may be primarily responsible for this similarity in attitude towards schooling and child’s education. In other words, the level of awareness among the villagers is similar owing to the common living conditions as well as in terms of distance and accessibility to urban area for market and other facilities.

Gender Difference

Results also indicated that the mean difference that the attitude of the male and female respondents regarding schooling did not differ significantly (Table 2). Unlike earlier times, the females enjoy almost equal status as male in households in terms of income and decision making. Previously, females were confined to the four walls of the house and were not aware of the value of education. Results showed that the mothers were in favour of schooling and education of their children like the fathers did.

Table 2: Mean scores of Male and Female respondents

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Significance
Male	51	67.29	7.16	0.57	143	P>.05
Female	94	66.58	7.24			



Parents’ Perception of Children’s Future Education and Related Issues

The interview data (obtained with open-ended questions) indicated that the difference between tribal and non-tribal groups was found in the future planning of children’s education. Data indicated that the compared to the tribal people, the non-tribal parents were more optimistic in providing their children the scope for higher studies, i.e., education beyond schooling. They were of the opinion that higher studies would enable their children to have better income and that schooling is not sufficient. The tribal parents were mostly associated with agriculture and even if they thought that education is important, the cost relating to higher education was not perceived to be affordable. Hence, a majority of the tribal parents reported that they would like to see their children earning for the family after completion of schooling rather than continue their education for higher studies. It can be inferred that while tribal were mostly concerned with making their children literate, the non-tribal were optimistic about making their children educated.

The interview data also indicated that, most of the parents, who belonged to non-tribal communities, had high expectation from school authorities regarding facilities they wanted their child should avail in school, such as adequate library, adequate furniture and equipment, and if possible, laboratories and workshops with reasonable facilities for vocational training like computer application. Provision for the girl child, they opined, to learn different types of co-curricular activities such as tailoring, and painting, besides education, would go a long way in making them self-sufficient in future. The tribal parents, in comparison, were happy with the school facilities; they didn’t have the vision of an ideal school for their children.

There are several social prejudices, social customs and norms which constrain access of women to education in general and higher education in particular. The age old customs and beliefs such as i) the seclusion and veiling of women and ii) world of woman as separate from men iii) women eventually getting married and fertility of investment on their education, are significant factors in the attitude of parents, especially uneducated parents, towards the education of women. The disparate levels of socio-economic development and social stratification adversely affect the position of women. Spurious development leads to poverty and the poverty and illiteracy maps usually coincide. Poverty affects the female education, as the first thing that is dropped is the investment on females. The objectives of boys and girls education differ in society. Though education of male is looked upon as an investment for the future source of income for the family, the education of female is more an obligation and is the obligation first to be ignored in case of crisis. However, in this study, evidence was not found regarding any constraints for the girl child in attending school. Irrespective of whether the child is a boy or a girl, parents wanted their children to attend schools regularly.

VII. Conclusion

There has been rapid expansion of education system in terms of enrolment, number of institutions, growth rate, etc since independence. The system has undergone a unique transformation from elitist to an egalitarian one (Powar, 1997). Therefore, all sections of the population have gained as a result of the enlargement of the system. However, the disparities between the disadvantaged groups (Gandhe, 1999) viz. minorities and non-disadvantaged groups have continued. Therefore, there is need to provide special care and opportunities to the traditional disadvantaged population in a democratic society such as ours, which stresses egalitarianism, social justice and economic development for all sections of society. It is with this in view that the Indian constitution provides an ideal of ‘Equality of opportunities’.

Efforts have been made to ensure greater access to the disadvantaged groups by making provisions for free ships, scholarships and reservation (Powar, 1997). Education Commission (Kothari Commission 1964-65), also observed and states, “One of the important social objectives of education is to equalize opportunities enabling the backward and under-privileged classes and individuals to use education as a level for the

improvement of their conditions. Every society that values social justice and is anxious to improve the lot of talent must ensure equality of opportunity to all sections of society.”

For improving the standard of education the state has made about 25 percent reservation in government jobs. This may motivate women and their parents to enroll them in higher education. The disadvantaged groups have less literacy and schooling and so there are not many who can access higher education. The universalization of elementary education may increase enrolment in higher education in future.

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