

Socio-Economic Conditions of Scheduled Castes : A study of Udhampur District of Jammu and Kashmir State

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Abstract

Socio-economic status refers to the status of an individual that can be measured with various factors such as income level, educational level, type of occupation, housing conditions and other basic services etc. The aim of the present paper is to study the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir state. The data for the study has been collected through the interview schedule. About 100 sample households were selected for the study and the data has been presented in tabulated form. This study has been found that socio economic conditions of scheduled castes in Udhampur district was not so good. They were suffered from basic facilities such as access to health, education, access to safe drinking water, sanitation , adequate employment, etc. Despite all the provisions made by government , they were still socially and economically backward.

Keywords: *Scheduled castes, socio-economic conditions, Udhampur, Jammu and Kashmir*

1. Introduction

Due to the rigid caste system , scheduled castes are those castes which remains at the bottom of hierarchy. They have been socially discriminated and exploited by the upper castes since time immemorial (Singh, 2009). They were considered as untouchables because people of these castes were associated with impure activities such as scavenging animals , washing clothes, clean urinals and cow shed of upper castes, etc. Due to the bottom rank in the social hierarchy, they were politically, socially, economically and educationally backward. However, many steps were taken by the British government to empower the depressed classes. The constitution of India is enriched with various safeguards for them to promote their social, political, economical and educational interests. The constitution of India made a various specific provisions for them such as providing reservations to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in government jobs and educational institutions and encourage these people to improve socially ,politically, educationally and economically. . Despite the existence of several constitutional safeguards, the socio-economic

conditions of surveyed scheduled castes in backward area of Udhampur district are still poor as they are socially discriminated and also suffering from illiteracy, poverty and low income, etc.

2. Literature Review

Das and Hossain (2015) studied the socio-economic status of Cobbler community of scheduled castes in Tripura. The study found that the educational level was not good among the Cobbler. As far as gender literacy is concerned, males were more literate than females. They were living in Kacha houses whose quality was low. The occupation pattern was not so good and majority of them were labour worker, daily labourer, casual worker, cleaning worker under government offices, etc. Their monthly income was also low in the study area which depicts the socio-economic conditions of cobbler community of scheduled castes was not well and government should take initiative for their development and betterment.

Singh (2014) made an attempt to study the socio-economic status of scheduled caste people of Kangra in Himachal Pradesh. According to him, the socio-economic status of some respondent was not good. Due to poor socio-economic conditions, it was difficult for them to provide good quality education to their children. The study found that most of the family income depended on daily wages. The study also states that majority of respondents were under debt because of education, health and other needs. The study also shows that social and economic status of some of the scheduled castes people were improved as compare to earlier time due to the improvement in education and also due to the reservation of scheduled caste people in various sector.

Apparaya (2015) analysed the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes in Kalaburagi district. For the study, a total of 450 respondents were interviewed to get the primary data. The study highlighted that many of the scheduled castes were suffering from deprivation in various social and economic aspects. The study found that the monthly income of the majority of scheduled castes was very low as they were living below poverty line. The study also observed that majority of them were still working in unorganised or caste based occupation. Hence, there is need of government to improve the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes in Kalaburagi district.

Dutta (2011) made an attempt to study the socio-economic activities of the scheduled castes population of Bachagaon village of Lakhimpur district in Assam. It was observed from the study that maximum families of scheduled castes in village were very poor as their main source of income was agriculture and fishing. Some members of the village were engaged in business sector but their earning was very low which depicts that the socio-economic condition was not good in the study area.

Arora and Koundal (2014) examined the socio-economic status of the scheduled castes living in border areas of Jammu district. The study highlighted that the scheduled castes in the study area suffered from the dual disabilities such as economic exploitation and social exploitation. The study based on both primary and secondary data. The study also found that the economic condition of scheduled castes living in border areas was not satisfactory as they lack basic facilities such as safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, educational facilities and adequate employment opportunities.

So there is an urgent need make proper implementation of the schemes to improve their social and economic backwardness.

3. Objectives of the study

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes in Udhampur district.
2. To give some suggestions for improving the conditions of scheduled castes in Udhampur district.

4. Research Methodology

In order to analyze the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes in Udhampur district , both primary and secondary data were used. With the help of census data 2011, first four villages were selected with the higher concentration of scheduled caste. About 40, 30, 20 and 10 respondent households were interviewed from four villages such as Lehair, Panjar , Ladda and Sownather. Therefore, a total of 100 sample households were selected to collect the primary data. A simple percentage method has been used to analyze the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes in Udhampur district.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1. Demographic Profile

Regarding the demographic profile of the surveyed scheduled castes, following observation has been made :

5.1.1. Total Surveyed Population

The study found that out of 100 respondent households, the total surveyed population was 532. Out of total surveyed population, about 52.82

percent were male population and 47.18 were female population respectively.

Table 1. Total surveyed population in the study area

Particulars	Numbers	Percentage
Male	281	52.82
Female	251	47.18
Total	532	100

Source- Field Survey

5.1.2. Age-wise Distribution of Scheduled Caste Population

Out of total scheduled caste surveyed population, majority of them (85.15 percent) were belongs to the age group 0 - 7 years and remaining (14.85 percent) were belongs to the age group 7 years and above. It shows that maximum population in the study area belongs to the age group 7 years and above.

Table 2. Age -wise distribution of Scheduled Caste population in the study area

Particulars	Numbers	Percentage
0-6 years	79	14.85
7 years and above	453	85.15
Total	532	100

Source- Field Survey

5.2. Economic Status of the Scheduled Castes

5.2.1. Primary Occupation of the Scheduled Caste Households

In earlier times, the occupation of the people were purely based on the caste. But after the provisions made by the Indian constitution for the depressed

classes in form of reservation in education and government institution, the employment opportunities available to the different castes according to their educational qualification. The information regarding the primary occupation of the sample scheduled caste households in study area are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of scheduled caste households by their primary occupation

Particulars	Numbers	Percentage
Agriculture	40	40
Daily wage	51	51
Government Job	5	5
Private Job	1	1
Self employed	3	3
Total	100	100

Source- Field Survey

The study found that majority of the households (51 percent) were engaged in daily wage as primary occupation, 40 percent were engaged in agriculture followed by government job (5 percent), self employed (3 percent) and private job (1 percent) respectively.

5.2.2. Annual Income level of Scheduled Caste Households

Income is one of the important component which depicts the economic status and economic power of the households. The information regarding the annual income of the households shown in table no. 4. which is given below.

Table 4. Annual income level of scheduled caste households in the study area

Particulars	Numbers	Percentage
Less than 50,000	43	43
50,001-1,00,000	42	42
1,00,001-150,000	8	8
1,50,001-2,00,000	2	2
2,00,001-3,00,000	3	3
Above 3,00,000	2	2
Total	100	100

Source- Field Survey

The data reveals that 43 percent of households were having annual income less than Rs 50,000 and 41 percent of households in Udhampur district were having the income between Rs 50001 to 1,00,000 annually. About 8 percent of households were falling in the income level 1,00,001 to 15,0000 annually, 2 percent of households were having the income between Rs. 1,51,000 to 2,00,000. It was quite discouraging that only 5 percent of households in Udhampur district whose yearly income was more than 2,00,000 .

5.3. Living Conditions of Scheduled Caste Households

Living condition of the households is also an important component that reflects the economic conditions of the households. There are number of indicators that depicts the living condition of scheduled caste households such as type of

households, sanitation facility , separate kitchen and drinking water facility.

5.3.1. Housing Condition of Scheduled Castes in the Study area

Good housing condition depicts the both social and economic conditions of the people. The housing condition of the surveyed scheduled caste households in Udhampur district was very poor. It can be seen from the table that out of total 100 households, only 1 household was found having semi-Pacca house and remaining 99 households were found having Kacha house. Since no Pacca household was found among the respondent households.

Table 5. Housing conditions of scheduled castes in the study area

Particulars	Number	Percentage
Kacha	99	99
Pacca	0	0
Semi-Pacca	1	1
Total	100	100

Source- Field Survey

5.3.2. Separate Toilet Facility

Access to toilet facility is important for dignity and security, particularly for women. Lack of toilet facility is another big problem which the scheduled castes in study area were facing. The study revealed that about 7 percent of scheduled caste households having the separate toilet facility and remaining 93 percent of scheduled caste households were not having such facility. It clearly shows that majority of sample scheduled caste households were going in open places for natural call.

Table 6. Separate toilet facility in scheduled caste households

Particulars	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	7
No	93	93
Total	100	100

Source- Field Survey

5.3.3. Separate Kitchen Facility

Separate kitchen facility at home is an vital indicator of health. Out of 100 sample households in study area, about 42 percent of scheduled caste households were having separate kitchen at their home. It shows that 58 percent of households did not have any separate kitchen at home which is very dangerous for their health.

Table 7. Separate kitchen facility in scheduled caste households

Particulars	Number	Percentage
Yes	42	42
No	58	58
Total	100	100

Source- Field Survey

5.3.4. Safe Drinking Water

Access to safe drinking water is also very important for good and healthy life. As far the access to drinking water is concerned, about 13 percent of sample households were satisfied with the quality of water and remaining 87 percent of households complained that they were not drinking safe water. It means majority were unsatisfied with the quality of water.

Table 8. Safe drinking water facility in scheduled caste households

Particulars	Number	Percentage
Yes	13	13
No	87	87
Total	100	100

Source- Field Survey

It was observed during the survey that the main source of water in study area was uncovered surface water which get easily polluted by dust particles, plastic and other waste materials.

5.4. Educational Status of Scheduled Castes in the study Area

Education is an important means for bridging the social distance between upper castes and lower castes. Out of total 532 surveyed population in study area, about 453 surveyed population were belonging to the age group 7 years and above which constitute 85.15 percent of total population. Out of total surveyed population who were from the age group 7 and above, about 59.38 percent were literate and 40.62 percent were illiterate in study area. The data clearly depicts the literacy rate among scheduled castes in study area was only 59.38 percent.

Table 9. Literacy rate of scheduled castes in the study area

Particulars	Number	Percentage
Literate	269	59.38
Illiterate	184	40.62
Total	453	100

Source- Field Survey

As far as the educational attainment among surveyed scheduled castes is concerned, out of total

literate, about 15.45 percent were educated upto primary level, 18.76 percent of population were completed the primary education, 4.86 percent were completed their completed their education upto matric level and 3.09 percent were educated upto higher secondary .

Table 10. Educational profile of scheduled castes in the study area

Particulars	Numbers	Percentage
Illiterate	184	40.62
Upto primary	70	15.45
Primary	85	18.76
Upper primary	73	16.11
Matric	22	4.86
Higher secondary	14	3.09
Graduation	3	0.66
Post graduation	2	0.44
Total	453	100

Source- Field Survey

It was quite discouraging fact that 1 percent were got the education upto higher education. The data also depicts that out of total literate in study area, 60.22 percent were male and 39.77 percent were female. It shows that the female were less literate as compared to male in the study area.

6. Conclusion and Suggestions

Analysis of data reveals that the socio-economic conditions of scheduled castes in Udhampur district was not good. The study further shows that the living conditions of scheduled caste households were quite unsatisfactory. They were continuously far behind in access to various basic facilities such as sanitation facility, education, drinking water, housing, etc. The annual income level of Scheduled

Castes was very less which further their low standard of living. There should be the provision of all these facilities in study area of Udhampur district for raising their social and economic status. It is the primary duty of government to address the problems of scheduled castes at local level in Udhampur district. Therefore, special programmes should be implemented for scheduled castes in Udhampur district in order to bring them in the main of the society.

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