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Constraints of SC and ST Women Students and their intensity in Pursuing Higher Education

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

Education acts as the means through which the aims and habits of a group of people sustain from one generation to the next. It is the formal process through which the society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, customs and values from one generation to another (www.wikipedia.org). The attainment of higher knowledge, improvement and acquisition of latest skills will go along with the level of education. It also contributes for the increase in national productivity. It is the formal process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, customs and values from one generation to another. Higher the education level, one can attain better knowledge, improved and latest skills. It also contributes for the increase in national productivity of any country. Our Constitution has also made some special provisions for the promotion of education among the weaker sections especially for (SC and STs) of the society.

Higher Education System in India

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China. The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission. According to UGC (2012) there are 42 central universities, 275 state universities, 130 deemed universities, 90 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 33 Institutes of National Importance. Other institutions include 33,000 colleges including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions (UGC web site).

Enrolment of SC and STs in Higher Education

However, owing to a number of constraints, and socio-economic factors, the benefits of expansion of educational facilities have not fully reached to all the communities specifically among the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). According to all India survey on Higher Education conducted by MHRD, the enrolment of OBC students in Higher Educational Institutions in India during 2010-11 has gone upto 27 percent (male 27.3% and female 26.8%) but in case of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students, it continues to be low. The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students' enrolment ratio during 2009-10 was 15 percent and it was 18.8 percent in 2010-11. Whereas the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women students' enrolment ratio during 2009-10 was 12.7 percent (men students' enrolment ratio was 17.1%) and it was 16.5 percent during 2010-11 (men students enrolment ratio was 20.9%). During 2010-11 out of 100 students getting into Higher Educational Institutions, less than eleven are from Scheduled Caste and less than five

are from Scheduled Tribe. Scheduled Caste students' enrolment was 10.2 percent and Scheduled Tribe students' enrolment was 4.4 percent including enrolment through Distance Mode (NSS report). In case of Andhra Pradesh the Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Educational Institutions during 2010-11 was 18, 47,479. Some of the reasons attributed for low enrolment of SC and ST girls in primary schools are social discrimination and economic exploitation, occupation of girl child in domestic chores, gender based inequality, low retention and high dropout rates of SC and ST girls compared to general category of girls, etc.,

Review of Literature

A few studies on the problems, facilities, community participation, financial assistance for promoting higher education among SC and ST students pursuing UG and PG courses are Dsouza (1980) "Education Inequalities among SCs", Singh(1986) "The problems and level frustration of Harijan students of University of Bhagalpur" etc., were conducted. Further studies related to Tribals were conducted by Kartikeswar Roul (2006), Das, B.C. (2006), Bijoya Mishra (2004-2006), Krishna Gupta (2007), Ranjana Mishra, (2007), Ms. Manvi Yadav (2007), P.A. Reddy, D. Uma Devi and E.M. Reddy (2010), Mukut Kr. Sonowal (2012) etc.,. From the above, it is clear that not many attempts have been made to identify and study the constraints and their sources for pursuing higher education among SC and ST women students and requires an in depth study in the area. Hence the present study was conceived.

Need for the study

Human Resource Development depends on the knowledge, competencies, skills, health status etc, which are low among the unprivileged and marginalized sections of people including SC and ST populations, whose accessibility to the benefits of technological advancement is still limited because of low educational levels. There is a need to study the factors affecting their participation in Higher education. The knowledge of the constraints will go a long way to promote their enrolment in Higher education leading to their mainstreaming. Hence the present study is formulated.

Statement of the Problem

"Constraints of SC and ST Women Students and their intensity in Pursuing Higher Education".

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the profile of SC and ST women students pursuing higher education.

- To study the constraints faced by the SC and ST women students in pursuing higher education.
- To identify the intensity of the constraints in pursuing higher education among SC and ST women students.
- To suggest suitable strategies for the promotion of higher education among SC and ST women students.

Hypotheses

- The profile of SC and ST women students pursuing higher education is not similar.
- The constraints faced by the SC and ST women students in pursuing higher education are not similar.
- The intensity of the constraints in pursuing higher education among SC and ST women students are not uniform.

Scope and Limitations of the Study: The present study is intended to identify the problems of SC and ST women students in pursuing higher education. Further it is also intended to study the intensity of the constraints of SC and ST women students pursuing higher education. The study is limited to the women students belonging to SC and ST. The study is limited to the find put the intensity of the constraints of SC and ST women. The area of the study is confined only to Tirupati Revenue Division of Chittoor district. The sample of the study includes 480 SC and ST women students pursuing Under Graduation and Post Graduation.

Methodology:

The locale of the study is Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh. The sample of the study constitutes SC and ST women students pursuing Under Graduation and Post Graduation in different branches of Arts, Science, Commerce and Professional courses. An equal number of women students from each branch belonging to SC and ST categories and studying both in UG and PG were selected as sample of the study. In order to collect the primary data on SC and ST women students pursuing higher education the investigators have designed a tool keeping in view the objectives of the study. The tool consists of two sections. The section I of the schedule was designed to elicit the personal background of the sample and section II is designed to elicit the information about various constraints and their sources from SC and ST women students in pursuing higher education. The tool thus prepared by the investigators was administered to the identified SC and ST women. The data thus collected from the sample students are pooled together and analysed by using the statistical techniques like Mean, SD for testing the hypotheses.

Findings of the study: The findings of the study were presented in two sections. The section I describe the profile of the SC and ST women students selected for the study. The section II describes the intensity of the constraints.

Section I: Profile of the Sample

Table 1: Caste and Course wise Profile of the Sample

| Course Level | Branch | Caste | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | SC | | ST | | Total | |
| | | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| UG | Arts | 50 | 12.40% | 10 | 12.80% | 60 | 12.50% |
| | Commerce | 48 | 11.90% | 12 | 15.40% | 60 | 12.50% |
| | Sciences | 52 | 12.90% | 8 | 10.30% | 60 | 12.50% |
| | Professional | 50 | 12.40% | 10 | 12.80% | 60 | 12.50% |
| | Total (A) | 200 | 49.80% | 40 | 51.30% | 240 | 50.00% |
| PG | Arts | 49 | 12.20% | 11 | 14.10% | 60 | 12.50% |
| | Commerce | 47 | 11.70% | 13 | 16.70% | 60 | 12.50% |
| | Sciences | 54 | 13.40% | 6 | 7.70% | 60 | 12.50% |
| | Professional | 50 | 12.50% | 10 | 12.80% | 60 | 12.50% |

The caste wise and course wise distribution of the sample (Table 1) shows that out of the total sample 402 belongs to Scheduled Caste and 78 belongs to Scheduled Tribe. Further out of the total sample belonging to Scheduled Caste, 200 are pursuing under graduation courses and 202 post graduation courses. Whereas out of the total sample belonging to Scheduled Tribe, 40 are pursuing under graduation courses and 38 post graduation courses. Out of the Scheduled Caste sample that are pursuing under graduation courses 50 are pursuing Arts courses, 48 Commerce, 52 Sciences and 50 Professional courses. Out of the Scheduled Tribe sample that are pursuing under graduation courses 10 are pursuing Arts courses, 12 Commerce, 8 Sciences and 10 Professional courses. Out of the Scheduled Caste sample that are pursuing post graduation courses 49 are pursuing Arts courses, 47 Commerce, 54 Sciences and 52 Professional courses. Out of the Scheduled Tribe sample that are pursuing post graduation courses 11 are pursuing Arts courses, 13 Commerce, 6 Sciences and 8 Professional courses. Half of the total sample is pursuing under graduation courses covered Arts, commerce, Sciences and Professional courses with 60 each. The remaining sample pursuing post graduation courses covered Arts, commerce, Sciences and Professional courses with 60 each.

From the above it is clear that the profile of SC and ST women students is not similar. The enrolment of SC women is higher than ST women. It seems that the constraints faced by SC and ST women in pursuing higher education differ. Hence the hypothesis "the profile of SC and ST women students pursuing higher education is not similar" is accepted.

Section II: Classification of the Total Constraints

The total constraints based on the intensity are grouped into three viz. More constraints, Moderate constraints and Less constraints. For the purpose of calculation Mean \pm 1/2 SD formula is used and the results are detailed below through tables.

(Total items=106; N=480; Mean= 2.73; SD=1.26; Mean+ 1/2 SD =3.36; Mean-1/2 SD =2.10)

More Constraints of SC/ST women

Table 2

More Constraints of SC/ST women

| S.No | Q.No. | Item | Mean | SD |
|------|-------|--------------------------------------|------|------|
| 1 | 7 | Culture of the colleges | 3.59 | 1.23 |
| 2 | 12 | Representation of SC/ST women | 3.36 | 1.25 |
| 3 | 22 | Lack of peer group support | 3.39 | 1.33 |
| 4 | 26 | Lack of guidance on higher education | 3.56 | 1.02 |
| 5 | 28 | Superstitions | 3.37 | 1.35 |

The findings relating to the constraints of the SC/ST women pursuing higher education reveals that the intensity of the constraints are more in case of the items viz. that the culture in the colleges i.e. the practices are found to be differ and the students are feeling it difficult to adjust with them. Further the language spoken i.e., dialect and accent in the college and the language of SC/ST women are also affecting the interaction of SC/ST women with others. This is coming in the way of their education. Further the low representations of SC/ST women, lack of peer group support, lack of guidance, their social status are affecting their education. In addition, the parents are also not willing to forego their support and to enroll them in higher education. In view of the above, the constraints which are mostly revolve around their own social, economic and personal spheres. There is need to cre-

Moderate Constraints of SC/ST women
Table 3

Moderate Constraints of SC/ST women

| S. No | Q. No. | Item | Mean | SD |
|-------|--------|---|------|------|
| 6 | 1 | Lack of encouragement from the HOD being male | 3.25 | 1.26 |
| 7 | 2 | Opportunity to play leadership role in the class | 2.62 | 0.98 |
| 8 | 3 | Women reservations are not implemented properly | 3.21 | 0.99 |
| 9 | 4 | Programmes for promoting self confidence among SC/ST women | 2.31 | 1.15 |
| 10 | 5 | Course curriculum helps to achieve the aims and goals of SC/ST women | 2.50 | 1.39 |
| 11 | 6 | Higher education is useful to down trodden | 2.12 | 1.41 |
| 12 | 8 | Utilising the skills and capacities of SC/ST women by the management | 2.46 | 1.44 |
| 13 | 9 | Scope to become partners in administration | 2.42 | 1.11 |
| 14 | 11 | SC/ST women face more problems than the general women | 2.46 | 1.50 |
| 15 | 13 | Teachers encourage the principle of lifelong learning among SC/STs | 2.44 | 1.25 |
| 16 | 14 | Special planning for promotion of education | 3.11 | 1.33 |
| 17 | 15 | Training programmes to improve leadership qualities among SC/ST women | 2.95 | 1.34 |
| 18 | 16 | Seminars and workshops on Gender sensitization | 2.90 | 1.06 |
| 19 | 17 | Caste discrimination is a constraint | 2.81 | 1.65 |
| 20 | 19 | Security problems to go far away | 2.56 | 1.31 |
| 21 | 20 | Gender discrimination in the family | 2.85 | 1.65 |
| 22 | 23 | Language is a constraint | 2.96 | 1.46 |
| 23 | 24 | Early marriage is a constraint | 2.95 | 1.76 |
| 24 | 27 | Lack of conducive environment at home | 2.75 | 1.31 |
| 25 | 29 | Family members health influences higher education | 2.89 | 1.36 |
| 26 | 30 | Household duties | 2.36 | 1.38 |
| 27 | 31 | SC/ST women not coming forward for higher education | 3.30 | 1.33 |
| 28 | 32 | Parents' illiteracy | 2.91 | 1.41 |
| 29 | 33 | Inadequate female teaching staff in colleges | 2.99 | 1.31 |
| 30 | 34 | Lack of gender awareness | 3.03 | 1.40 |
| 31 | 38 | Dependence on other families for economic support | 3.05 | 1.11 |
| 32 | 41 | Unable to pay fee for college programmes | 2.25 | 1.22 |
| 33 | 43 | Forced to work for supporting the family | 2.35 | 1.37 |
| 34 | 44 | Unable to pay college administration fee | 2.18 | 1.27 |
| 35 | 45 | Difficult to understand English | 2.58 | 1.35 |
| 36 | 46 | Difficult to understand the lessons | 2.68 | 1.03 |
| 37 | 47 | Non availability of materials | 3.15 | 1.49 |
| 38 | 48 | Unable to compete with peer group | 3.18 | 1.35 |
| 39 | 49 | Language barriers | 3.04 | 1.40 |
| 40 | 50 | Lack of special counseling classes on education | 3.33 | 1.21 |

The moderate constraints faced by SC/ST women in pursuing higher education includes gender discrimination in the family as well as in the institutions, lack of cooperation from the male head of the departments, limited scope to participate in the administration and college programmes to exhibit their leadership skills, lack of gender awareness programmes in the colleges, lack of training and special programmes to

improve the leadership skills, capacities, education and to promote self confidence among SC/ST women.

Further the study explores that early marriages, illiteracy of the parents, forced to work to support the family becomes constraints to them in the process of pursuing higher education. Even if the SC/ST women are enrolled in higher education after marriage, rearing of the children and caring of the aged come in their way of education. Due to inadequate women colleges, women hostels with special facilities, lack of transportation facilities and teasing of students are also coming in way of their higher education. Further due to lack of security, the parents are not willing to send their girl children to pursue higher education and to keep them in the hostels.

The SC/ST women who have enrolled in higher education, there are no incentives for their hard work. The non receipt of scholarships, payment of admission fee as well as fee for other programmes, lack of financial support for their family are also affecting their education. Further the language used by the teachers in class rooms and by other students, low levels of understanding of english among SC/ST women students also become barriers to their education. The moderate constraints of SC/ST women shows that the culture, traditions, low literacy levels, poverty, non secured income of the family, lack of awareness about the importance of education, etc are found to be the root cause for their constraints. Hence there is a need to take measures to promote the awareness among SC/STs about the importance of education, to increase women colleges and special hostels with required facilities, to conduct programmes to improve the studies, etc to increase the participation of SC/ST women in higher education.

Less Constraints of SC/ST women
Table 4

Less Constraints of SC/ST women

| S. No | Q. No. | Item | Mean | SD |
|-------|--------|---|------|------|
| 41 | 10 | Teachers are expecting perfect educational performance from SC/ST women | 1.49 | 0.78 |
| 42 | 18 | Extent of family support to women to pursue higher education | 1.83 | 1.39 |
| 43 | 21 | Marriage is a constraint | 1.49 | 1.05 |
| 44 | 25 | Rearing children | 1.80 | 0.85 |
| 45 | 35 | Poverty is a constraint | 1.43 | 0.91 |
| 46 | 36 | Lack of economic support for the family | 1.87 | 1.21 |
| 47 | 37 | Earnings of family head is not sufficient to the family | 1.41 | 0.67 |
| 48 | 39 | Indebtedness of the family | 1.54 | 1.03 |
| 49 | 40 | Unable to purchase the books | 2.08 | 1.23 |
| 50 | 42 | Family is unable to meet the personal requirements | 2.04 | 1.23 |

SC/ST women did not consider some of the items as serious constraints which come in their way of education. They include expectation of the teachers, lack of family support, low income of the family, lack of supporters for the family, marriage, indebtedness of the family, inability to purchase the books, etc. So they may be neglected as they do not affect the higher education of SC/ST women. In view of the above the hypothesis "The constraints faced by the SC and ST women students in pursuing higher education are not

similar" is accepted.

Hence the hypotheses, 'The constraints faced by the SC and ST women students in pursuing higher education are not similar' and 'The intensity of the constraints in pursuing higher education among SC and ST women students are not uniform' are accepted.

Hence the hypothesis, 'The profile of SC and ST women students pursuing higher education is not similar' is accepted.

Suggestions:

From the above it is clear that the constraints which are mostly resolve around their own social, economic and personal spears. In view of the above certain suggestions are made viz. need to create awareness and promote the adjustment with the environment of the higher education institutions and self confidence so as to succeed in their efforts, need to take measures to promote the awareness among SC/STs about the importance of education, to increase women colleges and special hostels with required facilities, to conduct programmes to improve the studies, gender awareness programmes, to protect SC/ST women from ragging and teasing, release of scholarships intime, relaxation of payment of fee by the colleges, providing books and other materials, introducing incentives for SC/ST women students, providing alternative income generating facilities to the families of SC/ST women pursuing higher education are some of the measures to increase the participation of SC/ST women in higher education, etc.