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Research Article

Assessing the Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Educational Disparities among Rural Adolescents

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Abstract
This article explores the Farmer Welfare Policies implemented in Telangana and analyzes their impact The problem of socioeconomic stratification continues to be one of the structural constraints preventing social equality in education attainment in rural areas of India. This paper is intended to empirically analyze the influence of socioeconomic stratification upon educational inequalities in the rural adolescents of the recently created Sri Sathya Sai District of Andhra Pradesh. For this purpose, data was gathered from a sample group of 200 students of grades 8-10, by employing a descriptive survey method, using an Economic Backwardness Scale and Educational Development Questionnaire.

Parametric statistical methods were used in this analysis, such as means, standard deviations, independent samples t-tests and correlation coefficients. Empirical results reveal the serious constraining role of economic backwardness upon structural access to educational resources, discontinuity of schooling and underachievement in education. Non-statistically significant ($t = 1.12, $p > 0.05$) gender differences in educational development were found, however, statistically significant ($t = 2.94, $p < 0.01$) depressed indices of educational development of rural adolescents compared with semi-urban adolescents. Importantly, an intermediate negative correlation that is statistically significant ($r = -0.46, $p < 0.01$) reveals the direct influence of economic deprivation upon education inequalities.
Keywords: Socioeconomic Status, Educational Disparities, Academic Achievement, Rural Adolescents, Economic Deprivation.

1. Introduction:

Education serves as the primary driving force behind social mobility, structural equity, and human capital management in developing countries. However, despite constitutional policies and affirmative action measures meant to democratize access to education in classrooms in India, there exist significant inequalities within the educational framework, based on various social factors. Some of the most structurally disadvantaged communities include the rural youth population, who must contend with various intersections of geography, history, and extreme poverty. One specific geographical region that is important for this study is that of the recently created Sri Sathya Sai District of Andhra Pradesh. Many households in rural areas continue to be dependent economically on rain-fed agriculture, subsidiary farming activity, and daily wage employment. This economic vulnerability has led to many of these same households being unable to afford school fees, transportation, and digital learning aids for their children.

Although many macroeconomic models assume that school presence implies easy access to education, structural poverty, poor household development, and lack of educational socialization skills within parents have all emerged as hidden obstacles for students. These have

culminated in higher dropout rates, poor daily attendance, and low educational performance among rural youth. To unpack these systemic linkages, this study investigates how variations in socioeconomic status (SES) generate visible educational disparities among adolescents within the rural spaces of Sri Sathya Sai District.

Investigating the structural nexus between material wealth and educational metrics is vital for several clear academic and policy reasons:

1. The Cycle of Deprivation: Rural populations are still caught in the grips of structural poverty cycles, where poor economic footing actively constrains the range of educational acquisition, preventing future generations from climbing the social ladder.
2. Welfare Sufficiency Assessment: Many state-sponsored welfare schemes like Amma Vodi, free textbooks, mid-day meal schemes exist, but stark disparities in actual learning outcomes remain, implying that material barriers extend beyond tuition fees.

   • Geographical hardships: Rural students are often forced to travel long distances from primary to secondary education, posing safety concerns and transportation costs that are directly linked to the household's economic status.
3. Strategic Policy Design: Understanding clearly how financial hardship affects student retention can help planners, local administrators and educators to design targeted interventions, rather than generalized, non-specific educational policies.

3. Statement of the Problem:

The main problem of the study is formally stated as "To assess the influence of socio-economic status on the educational inequalities of rural youths of Sri Sathya Sai District, Andhra Pradesh.

4. Operational Definitions of Core Terms

1. **Socioeconomic Status / Economic Backwardness:** Characterized by a composite measure of low monthly household income, unstable or seasonal parental employment (e.g., daily wage labor), substandard or insecure housing conditions, and a distinctive lack of secondary material and educational resources in the home.
2. **Educational Disparities / Educational Development:** An integrated index of multi-dimension indicators e.g., student academic performance, consistency of institutional attendance, scholastic retention, and direct physical or digital access to learning aids.
3. **Rural Adolescents / Secondary School Students:** Individuals residing in rural areas and enrolled in formal secondary institutional education in classes 8, 9 and 10.

5. Objectives of the Investigation

1. To assess the current socioeconomic profile of rural adolescents of Sri Sathya Sai District.
2. To evaluate the present condition of educational development among the sampled rural student population.
3. To find out the significant differences in educational development of rural adolescents on the basis of gender and geographical locality (rural vs. semiurban) wise.
4. Analyze the magnitude and the direction of the statistical relationship between economic backwardness and educational development of adolescents.
5. To provide practical, data-driven interventions to reduce educational disparities for vulnerable rural cohorts.

6. Hypotheses of the Study

To address the research questions systematically, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance:

1. There is no statistically significant difference in the educational development of rural adolescents across gender groups (boys vs. girls).

2. There is no statistically significant difference in the educational development of rural adolescents across geographical localities (rural vs. semi-urban).
3. There is no statistically significant relationship between the economic backwardness of a household and the corresponding educational development of the adolescent student.

7. Variables of Research Focus

1. **Independent Variable:** Socioeconomic Status / Degree of Economic Backwardness
2. **Dependent Variable:** Educational Development / Disparities

8. Scope and Delimitations

1. **Geographical Scope:** The empirical field of study is strictly confined to the administrative boundaries of the Sri Sathya Sai District in Andhra Pradesh.
2. **Target Population:** The assessment focuses entirely on secondary school adolescents drawn from families residing within rural areas.
3. **Sample Size:** The study group is limited to 200 secondary school students.
4. **Methodological Delimitations:** The study focuses specifically on senior secondary school pupils (classes 8 to 10) and relies on structured, self-reported survey instruments and school records for data collection.

9. Systemic Review of Literature

i. Understanding marginalization in India requires looking closely at how economics, geography, and structural bias intersect.

   a. **Sardar (2023)** analyzed the socioeconomic structures of rural marginalized households in Hooghly district, using primary household data. The study's results indicated that even when marginalized communities are numerically dominant, they all suffer from low levels of education, low income, and employment instability. This is primarily due to being mired in low productivity farming and manual work, which further shows that the long-term educational gaps in the society are primarily due to persistent material poverty.

   b. **Bhukya et al. (2024)** performed an exhaustive systematic review analyzing the causes of school dropouts in rural India. They noted that school dropouts were due to the effects of multiple institution-related problems, like poor infrastructure and the long distances of schools, that combine with economic pressures at the household level, like child labor and domestic work (which includes chores) and a lack of parental literacy. This indicates that the economic pressures at the household level are the main factors causing school retention problems for rural children.

   c. **Jana (2025)** talked about rural adolescents and educational aspirations in terms of the socio-psychological dimensions. The study found that the socio-economic condition of a household strongly anchors the individual's academic self-efficacy, motivation, and career aspirations. In the case of poor and resource-less households, the cultural and monetary constraints lower educational aspirations, making it even more challenging for rural youth to aspire towards and attain higher education.

ii. Synthesis and Research Gap:

When the three studies are analyzed together, we can identify a clear causation. Structural economic poverty (Sardar, 2023) creates significant pressure within the household, directly resulting in school dropout (Bhukya et al., 2024) and simultaneously diminishing long-term psychological and vocational aspirations (Jana, 2025).

Though the literature provides cross-border wide scopes of these patterns, there is, however, a clear research absence governing the recently created Sri Sathya Sai Sai district. This area is inclusive of its distinct combination of rural settlements, dryland farming problems, and internal

seasonal migration. This research attempts to fill in that absence by gathering primary data to analze how household poverty translates into deficits in education among adolescents in this district.

10. Research Methodology

10.1 Research Design

This investigation used a descriptive survey research design. It permits quantitative data regarding socioeconomic conditions and educational metrics to be collected and analyzed in a systematic way while leaving participants' environments unchanged.

10.2 Sample Selection

A total of 200 rural students were randomly selected for the study using purposive sampling from government secondary schools in Sri Sathya Sai District. The sample consisted of equal numbers of boys and girls, 100 each, and rural and semi-urban youth, 120 and 80, respectively.

10.3 Research Instruments:

Two primary standardized instruments were utilized for data collection:

1. **Economic Backwardness Scale:** The Economic Backwardness Scale developed and standardized by Kuppuswamy (1981) was used in the present study to assess the socio-economic status of secondary school students' families. The tool consists of items related to household monthly income, parental occupational stability, educational status of parents, residential conditions, and possession of essential household assets. The responses were scored systematically; wherein higher scores indicate greater levels of economic deprivation and backwardness. The scale was administered individually to the respondents, and the obtained scores were utilized to classify students according to their socio-economic background. The tool has been widely employed in educational and social science research due to its reliability and suitability for measuring economic conditions among school-going children.
2. **Educational Development Questionnaire:** The Educational Development Questionnaire, developed by the investigator based on Bloom's (1956) educational assessment framework, was used to assess the educational development of secondary school students. The tool includes items related to school attendance, academic performance, home study environment, and utilization of learning resources. Higher scores indicate better educational development. The questionnaire was administered individually and found suitable for educational research among secondary school students.

10.4 Statistical Analysis Methods:

The collected quantitative data were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using standard statistical software. The analytical steps included calculating central tendency and dispersion metrics (Mean, Standard Deviation, and Variance), checking distribution shapes (Skewness and Kurtosis), testing group differences via independent samples t-tests, and evaluating variable relationships using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r).

11. Data Analysis, Interpretation, and Discussion:

Table 1:

Distribution Metrics for Household Economic Backwardness and Student Educational Development

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Economic Backwardness	200	78.46	11.24	126.30	0.68	1.92
Educational Development	200	64.38	9.86	97.22	-0.44	0.86

Table 1 presents a clear picture of the sample's background. The Economic Backwardness index shows a high mean score of 78.46 with a positive skewness (0.68). This confirms that a substantial majority of the sampled households experience high levels of economic deprivation and material scarcity. Conversely, the mean score for Educational Development stands at a modest 64.38, carrying a negative skewness of -0.44. This indicates a clustering of scores toward the lower end of the educational achievement scale, showing that most adolescents face dampened academic outcomes and restricted access to core learning resources.

Table 2:
Differential Analysis of Educational Development by Gender

Gender Group	N	Mean Score	SD	Computed t-value	Statistical Significance
Boys	100	65.14	9.52	1.12	Not Significant ($p > 0.05$)
Girls	100	63.62	10.18		

Table 2 addresses the first null hypothesis (H_01) regarding gender differences. The mean educational development score for boys (65.14) is slightly higher than that for girls (63.62). However, the calculated t-value of 1.12 falls well below the critical value required at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, **H_01 cannot be rejected**. This indicates that within these marginalized communities, the challenges of economic poverty affect both male and female adolescents quite equally, meaning financial hardship acts as an all-encompassing barrier to education regardless of gender.

Table 3:
Differential Analysis of Educational Development by Locality

Geographical Locality	N	Mean Score	SD	Computed t-value	Statistical Significance
Rural	120	62.15	9.84	2.94	Highly Significant ($p < 0.01$)
Semi-Urban	80	67.72	9.12		

Table 3 evaluates the second null hypothesis (H_02) focused on geographical location. Adolescents residing in semi-urban areas achieved a noticeably higher mean educational development score (67.72) than those living in purely rural areas (62.15). The computed t-value of 2.94 is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Consequently, **H_02 is confidently rejected**. This demonstrates that regional infrastructure gaps are quite pronounced; semi-urban students benefit from better school access, shorter travel distances, and superior institutional infrastructure compared to rural adolescents.

Table 4:
Correlation Matrix Between Economic Deprivation and Educational Development

Correlated Variable Pair	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	Calculated p-value	Nature of Statistical Relationship
Economic Backwardness × Educational Development	–0.46	0.00	Moderate Negative Correlation (Significant at 0.01)

Table 4, the correlation coefficient (r) between Economic Backwardness and Educational Development is **-0.46**, with a p-value approaching 0.00. This indicates a statistically significant, moderate negative relationship, leading to the **rejection of H_03**. This negative value provides clear empirical proof that as household economic backwardness

intensifies, an adolescent's educational development scores decline systematically. Financial hardship directly limits a family's capacity to invest in textbooks, private tutoring, technology, and basic nutrition, which in turn drives down school attendance and classroom performance.

12. Main Findings of the Investigation:

1. **Deep Poverty:** The majority of the families residing in the rural region of the Sri Sathya Sai District exhibit signs of high poverty because of the uncertain nature of their manual jobs and lower gains from agriculture.
2. **Low Educational Development:** Educational development is found to be relatively low for the rural adolescents who have grown up in an environment that promotes such disparities.
3. **Same Challenges Faced by Both Boys and Girls:** There are no gender differences in terms of educational outcomes of these adolescents, as gender does not make any significant difference here ($t = 1.12$).
4. **High Disparity between Locality Levels:** The locality makes an enormous impact on education development in rural regions, as it is much more difficult for rural adolescents to learn compared to semi-urban ($t = 2.94$).
5. **Poverty as a Cause of Low Education Development:** It has been confirmed through a strong inverse correlation that economic backwardness leads to poor educational development among these adolescents ($r = -0.46$).

13. Educational Implications:

The findings of this study point to several necessary policy adaptations:

1. **Focused Financial Support:** Current scholarship schemes must be increased and allocated strictly according to a sliding scale of incomes, so as to ensure that the poorest among the rural families get enough monetary aid to tide over the period of reduced seasonal income.
2. **Creation of Infrastructure at Residence:** The state government needs to set up residential educational institutes and ensure that boarding facilities are available in far-flung areas of Sri Sathya Sai district.
3. **Supplementing the Digital Gap:** Considering the increasing trend of technology-based teaching methods, it is important for the welfare departments to provide each rural community with a free set of learning materials in addition to physical textbooks and affordable digital devices.
4. **Promoting Community Engagement for Parental Participation:** Local communities can organize awareness camps to help parents realize the benefits of secondary education so that their children refrain from seasonal work.
5. **Setting up Remedial Classes:** High school institutions having a significant number of disadvantaged children must organize after-school sessions to help the latter overcome their problems related to a lack of academic guidance at home.

14. Conclusion:

From the findings of this study, the economic status is still one of the significant factors that have a bearing on the educational route adopted by the young people from the Sri Sathya Sai region of Andhra Pradesh. Although there exist only minor gender differences amongst this vulnerable population, location and poverty levels have great weight with regards to academic success amongst teenagers. Simply conducting generic programs of education cannot be enough for eliminating these inequities. More actions need to be taken with regard to institution and economics to ensure education equity.

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