

Barriers to Education and their Consequences— A Case of Rural Assam

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Abstract—This case study explores barriers to education and consequences in rural Assam. It focuses on class primary school students from three different schools: rural schools and tea garden schools, with 150 students and their parents in total. It identifies various socio-economic, infrastructural, and cultural barriers which hinder the academic success of students and contribute to high dropout rates. Among other factors, parental education, economic difficulties, absenteeism, school infrastructure, and attitudes toward education are major obstacles to attending school. It will investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic impacts students' attendance and learning achievement in schools. The general idea behind the research is that such aspects will be used as grounds to identify the issues encountered in learning and devise mechanisms for improvement.

Index Terms—Barriers to Education, Parental Involvement in Education, Teacher Challenges, Status of Education

I. INTRODUCTION

From a global perspective, it is an undeniable truth that a nation's advancement is significantly reliant on its educational components. It is widely recognized that education is a crucial role in alleviating poverty. Education significantly influences all facets of human existence. It is an essential investment for personal and economic advancement. It is significant for both the individual and society. Conversely, higher education is associated with numerous beneficial characteristics for professional life, social and personal well-being, as well as for the economic prosperity of a country.

However, there are still challenges in rural and marginalized communities of India. Assam is a northeastern state in India, which has a rich cultural diversification and socio-economic complexity. Despite the government's effort to increase literacy rates and improve education infrastructure, the challenges of high dropout rates in rural Assam persist, particularly at the primary level. The rates of dropout in rural areas are usually more than the national

average, thus thwarting the efforts toward universal education.

The literacy rate in Assam was 73.18% according to the 2011 Census, which was lower than the national average of 74.04%, with a marked disparity between urban and rural areas. The dropout rate at the primary education level, particularly in remote rural districts, is alarming. Poverty, inadequate infrastructure, socio-cultural norms, and gender inequality exacerbate this issue, leading children to leave school before completing their education.

This case study focuses on This case study is based in the Koraihowa village of Jorhat district, Assam with the aim of identifying the barriers to education and analysing its impact on rural communities. In this survey, it draws out quantitative data and interviews with other stakeholders that provide a comprehensive view of the problem.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research is guided by the following key objectives:

1. To identify the barriers of education that parents, students, and teachers face, and to identify the consequences of these barriers.
2. To analyse the role of school infrastructure, local support systems, and community attitudes toward education.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study based on Koraihowa village of Jorhat Assam. It is situated in the Jorhat West subdivision of the Jorhat district in Assam, India. It is located 18 km from Jorhat, the district and sub-district headquarters of Karai Khowa village. According to 2009 statistics, Dakhin Parbatia serves as the gram panchayat for Karai Khowa village. The entire land area of the village is 158.18 hectares. Karaikhowa has

a total population of 574 individuals, comprising 301 males and 273 females. The literacy rate in Karai Khowa village is 46.69%, comprising 55.48% of males and 37.00% of females who are literate. Karai Khowa hamlet comprises approximately 134 homes. Jorhat is the closest town to Karai Khowa village for all significant commercial activities, located around 18 km distant.

Data for this case study was collected from three schools which were situated at Koraikhowa village in rural and tea garden schools. In the total of 150 students belonging to class 5 with their parents were interviewed and the problems being faced by the concerned stakeholders while undergoing this process of education. At the same time, this also dealt with understanding socio-economic profiles of the students, their performances at different academic levels, and also the general scenario of schools. A structured interview was also conducted to elicit information on the following: household income, parents' education, student health, and involvement of the community in education, among others, besides questionnaires on school infrastructure. The analysis then utilized MS Excel.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

The study found that the socio-economic status of students' families played a crucial role in their educational experience. A Total 150 students were interviewed from three different schools. It was found that the majority of the students, about 68.64%, hailed from Koraikhowa, with the rest coming from nearby areas such as Sokolani Pothar and Mohbondha.

A significant percentage of the parents were employed in tea gardens or as daily wage laborers (46.61%), which influenced their ability to support their children's education. These economic constraints were often exacerbated by other factors such as alcoholism among some parents, which further limited their engagement in their children's education. In many cases, these parents were illiterate or had very low educational levels, which prevented them from understanding the importance of academic guidance at home. The findings highlight that 55.08% of the parents were unaware of their household income, a clear indicator of their economic instability.

B. Barriers to Education

1. Parental Barriers

One of the key findings of this study is the lack of parental education, which emerged as a significant barrier to student success. The majority of the parents in Koraikhowa had low levels of formal education, with 68.64% of parents either illiterate or having only primary education. This lack of educational attainment among parents has a direct impact on their ability to guide their children in academics. Many parents did not understand the importance of schoolwork and could not help their children with homework, particularly in subjects that require specific skills like mathematics and science.

Further, many parents worked long hours in the tea gardens or as daily wage earners, leaving them with little time to engage in their children's education. This often resulted in parents' lack of involvement in school activities, including parent-teacher meetings and the monitoring of academic progress. Additionally, 30.17% of the parents acknowledged that they did not have the time or the resources to ensure their children's regular attendance at school. The burden of work, combined with limited access to educational resources, compounded the situation.

Another concerning factor was the prevalence of alcoholism among some parents, particularly fathers. 12.28% of respondents reported issues related to alcohol abuse, which contributed to poor family dynamics, financial instability, and neglect of children's educational needs. In many cases, children from such households struggled with lack of emotional and academic support, leading to poor school performance and absenteeism.

2. Student Barriers

Students in Koraikhowa also faced numerous barriers in their pursuit of education. One of the most notable challenges was irregular school attendance, which was prevalent in both rural and tea garden schools. Approximately 29.66% of the students reported frequent absenteeism due to health issues, family responsibilities, or the necessity of working in tea gardens. These students were often required to help their parents with household chores, particularly during the tea-picking season, which meant they missed school frequently.

Moreover, many students faced difficulties with language comprehension. A significant portion of students from tea garden areas spoke Assamese or

local dialects, while the medium of instruction in the schools was predominantly Bengali or English. This language barrier posed a serious challenge for students in understanding lessons and performing well in exams, as their comprehension levels were often limited.

Another important finding was the lack of academic guidance. The absence of structured home tutoring and local educational support systems meant that students had limited access to supplementary learning. Around 40.51% of students stated that they did not receive any help with their studies outside school hours, leaving them without the necessary academic support to succeed. Without adequate guidance, many students struggled with low academic performance, resulting in poor grades and a lack of motivation to continue their studies.

3. Teacher Barriers:

Teachers in rural Assam also faced significant challenges that contributed to the educational barriers experienced by students. Inconsistent attendance among teachers was a key issue identified during the study. Many teachers were not regularly present in schools, particularly in the remote tea garden areas. This absenteeism was due to various factors such as health issues, personal commitments, and the lack of motivation due to inadequate salaries and professional development opportunities. According to 20.34% of the students, their teachers did not attend school consistently, which negatively impacted their learning experience.

Additionally, there were concerns regarding teacher-student ratios. In many schools, particularly those in tea garden areas, classrooms were overcrowded, with one teacher often responsible for teaching 50 or more students. This made it difficult for teachers to provide individual attention to students who needed extra help, further contributing to low academic performance and disengagement.

Moreover, lack of resources such as teaching materials, textbooks, and learning aids also hampered the teachers' ability to engage students effectively. Teachers reported that insufficient teaching resources made it difficult to teach subjects like science and mathematics, which require practical demonstrations and experiments. Without these resources, teaching became a one-way process, with limited student engagement.

C. Consequences of Such Barriers

The barriers discussed above had significant consequences on students' academic performance and future prospects. The high dropout rate in the region was a direct consequence of financial instability, irregular school attendance, and low academic performance. According to the study, 6.78% of the students had already dropped out of school, with most citing financial difficulties, family responsibilities, and health issues as reasons for discontinuing their education.

The academic outcomes were also concerning. Only 5.08% of students achieved grade A, while 28.81% obtained grade B, and 25.42% received grade C. This indicates that a significant portion of students were performing below average, which is likely to affect their ability to progress to higher grades or pursue further education. Moreover, 50.85% of the students expressed no clear career aspirations, highlighting a lack of guidance and exposure to future opportunities. The impact of COVID-19 exacerbated these issues. The pandemic-induced school closures and the shift to online learning left many students disconnected from their education. Post-COVID absenteeism was significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels, with 30% of students reporting that they missed school frequently after the reopening. Students from tea garden areas were particularly affected due to a lack of internet access and the necessity of working during harvest seasons.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

To address these challenges and improve educational outcomes in rural Assam, the following recommendations are made:

1. Increased Financial Support

Implement government schemes to provide financial assistance to low-income families for purchasing educational resources, uniforms, and books.

2. Improved School Infrastructure

Schools need better infrastructure, including adequate classrooms, sanitation facilities, drinking water, and learning materials, to provide a conducive learning environment.

3. Teacher Training and Retention

Focus on regular professional development for teachers and provide incentives for teachers to stay in rural schools. Address teacher absenteeism by ensuring better pay and working conditions.

4. Community and Parental Involvement

Initiate programs to engage parents in their children's education, such as parent-teacher meetings, workshops, and campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of education.

5. Health and Welfare Programs

Introduce health programs in schools to address the health issues that prevent students from attending regularly, and provide school-based health services.

6. Post-COVID Support

Develop strategies to re-engage students who were disconnected during the pandemic, such as remedial classes, after-school tutoring, and providing digital learning tools where possible.

VI. CONCLUSION

The barriers to education in rural Assam, as evidenced by this case study, are multi-faceted and deeply entrenched in socio-economic, infrastructural, and cultural factors. By addressing these barriers through comprehensive policy interventions and community engagement, there is potential to significantly improve educational outcomes in regions like Koraikhowa. A holistic approach that includes financial support, infrastructural improvements, teacher training, and community involvement is essential for breaking the cycle of low educational achievement and high dropout rates in rural Assam.

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