



Economic backwardness and educational development of scheduled tribes: A case study of Sri Sathya Sai District

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Abstract

Economic conditions have a significant impact on educational opportunities, especially for groups that are already behind, such as Scheduled Tribes (STs). This study investigates the correlation between economic underdevelopment and educational advancement among Scheduled Tribe students in Sri Sathya Sai District, Andhra Pradesh. We used purposive sampling to select a group of 200 ST students. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire covering economic status, parental occupation, educational facilities and academic progress. Statistical techniques such as Mean, Standard Deviation, t-test, and Pearson correlation were employed for analysis. The findings revealed that economic backwardness significantly influences access to educational resources, school continuity and academic performance. This study highlights the need for targeted economic and educational interventions to enhance the educational development of students belonging to the Scheduled Tribes.

Keywords: Economic backwardness, educational development, scheduled tribes, academic achievement

Introduction

People generally agree that education is a powerful tool for changing societies and economies. However, in India, not everyone has the same access to good schools. Scheduled Tribes, one of the most disadvantaged communities, continue to face serious challenges in achieving educational equity. Economic backwardness, geographical isolation, lack of infrastructure, and limited parental awareness collectively hinder educational progress.

Sri Sathya Sai District is home to a significant Scheduled Tribe population, many of whom depend on agriculture, daily wage labor, and forest-based livelihoods. Persistent poverty and limited access to educational facilities often result in low enrollment, high dropout rates, and poor academic achievement among tribal students.

Understanding the relationship between economic conditions and educational development is essential for formulating effective policy. This study attempts to analyze how economic backwardness affects the educational development of Scheduled Tribe students in the selected district.

Significance and Need of the Study

This study is significant for the following reasons.

- Scheduled Tribes experience chronic economic deprivation, which directly affects educational access.
- Education is a key factor in social mobility among tribal communities.
- Despite government welfare schemes, educational gaps persist in India.
- Identifying economic barriers can help improve policy implementations.
- The findings can support planners, educators, and administrators in designing inclusive educational strategies for students with disabilities.

There is a strong need to assess whether economic conditions act as a barrier to educational development and to what extent supportive measures reach tribal students.

Statement of the Problem

“Economic Backwardness and Educational Development of Scheduled Tribes: A Case Study of Sri Sathya Sai District.”

Operational Definitions

- Economic Backwardness: Low family income, unstable parental occupation, poor housing conditions, and lack of material resources.
- Educational Development: Academic performance, school attendance, continuation of schooling, and access to learning facilities.
- Scheduled Tribes: Communities officially recognized as Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution of India.
- Secondary School Students: Students studying in classes 8–10.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the economic status of Scheduled Tribe students.
2. To study the level of educational development among Scheduled Tribe students.
3. To examine differences in educational development based on gender and locality.
4. To analyze the relationship between economic backwardness and educational development,
5. To suggest measures for improving educational outcomes among the STs.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference in the educational development of Scheduled Tribe students based on gender and locality.
2. There is no significant relationship between economic backwardness and educational development.

Variables of the Study

- Independent Variable: Economic Backwardness
- Dependent Variable: Educational Development

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

Scope

- Focuses on Scheduled Tribe students in the Sri Sathya Sai District.
- It includes economic and educational indicators.
- The sample size was 200 students.

Delimitations

- This study was limited to secondary school students.
- The study was confined to one district.
- Based on self-reported data.

Reviews of Literature

1. Sanjib Sardar (2023) studied on, examines the socio-economic status of the Scheduled Castes population in Tirol village of Arambagh, Hooghly district, based on primary household data. The findings indicate that despite being numerically dominant, the SC community continues to face low educational attainment, limited employment opportunities, and poor income. Agriculture and daily wage labor remain the primary occupations, reflecting economic insecurity and a lack of livelihood diversification. Housing conditions are generally inadequate, although certain improvements have been noted owing to government welfare schemes. Overall, the study highlights persistent socioeconomic backwardness and stresses the need for targeted developmental interventions to uplift the Scheduled Castes community.
2. Anil Bhukya et al. (2024) examined on “Antecedents of Children Dropout in Tribal Schools of India: A Systematic Review,” systematically reviewing the antecedents of children’s dropout in tribal schools across India by synthesizing evidence from selected empirical studies. The review identifies multiple interrelated factors influencing dropout, including poor school infrastructure, irrelevant curricula, ineffective teaching practices, and long distances to schools. Socio-economic constraints, such as poverty, child labor, household responsibilities, and parental illiteracy, further aggravate the problem of school discontinuation among tribal children. Cultural factors, gender disparities, and limited community support are also significant contributors. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for holistic and context-specific educational policies to improve tribal student retention and educational participation.
3. Sri Krishna Jana (2025) studied the Socio-Psychological Dimensions of Educational Aspirations among Tribal Adolescents, focusing on the influence of socio-psychological and cultural factors on students’ educational aspirations. This study highlights the role of family background, community environment, self-efficacy, and motivation in shaping academic goals. It emphasizes that educational aspirations are socially constructed and influenced by socioeconomic conditions. The findings reveal that limited resources and cultural constraints often hinder high aspiration levels among tribal adolescents. The study concludes by advocating for culturally responsive educational strategies to support tribal learners.

Summary and Linkage of the Studies

The reviewed studies collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic, educational, and psychological challenges faced by Scheduled Castes and

tribal communities in India. Sardar (2023) highlights the persistent socio-economic backwardness of Scheduled Castes, marked by low education, unstable employment, and inadequate living conditions, which are foundational barriers to educational development. Extending this structural perspective, Bhukya *et al.* (2024) identify how such socioeconomic disadvantages, along with institutional and cultural factors, directly contribute to high dropout rates among tribal schoolchildren. Further strengthening this linkage, Jana (2025) demonstrates that these material and social constraints also shape the socio-psychological dimensions of education by limiting aspirations, motivation, and self-efficacy among tribal adolescents. Together, these studies establish a clear connection between socioeconomic deprivation, educational discontinuity, and reduced educational aspirations, underscoring the need for integrated and culturally responsive interventions to address educational inequality among marginalized communities.

Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive survey method was used.

Sample

A sample of 200 Scheduled Tribe students was selected through purposive sampling.

Tools Used

1. Economic Backwardness Scale
2. Educational Development Questionnaire

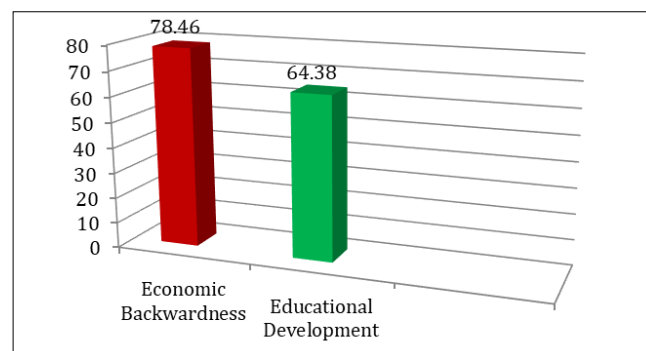
Statistical Techniques

- Mean
- Standard Deviation
- Percentage
- t-test
- Pearson correlation

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Levels of Economic Backwardness and 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



Graph 1:

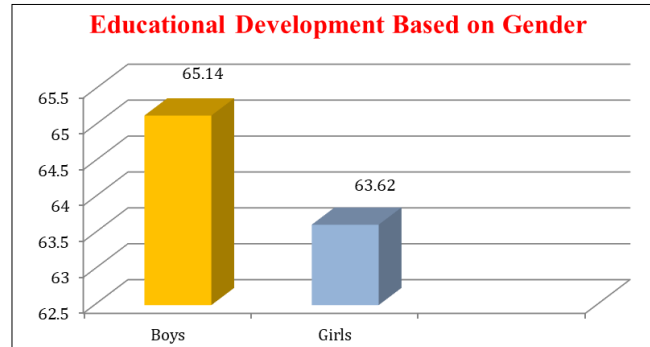
Interpretation

Economic backwardness shows moderate positive Skewness, indicating that a large proportion of students

experience high economic deprivation. Educational development scores are moderately low, reflecting limited academic progress among many tribal students.

Table 2: Educational Development Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
Boys	100	65.14	9.52	1.12	Not Significant
Girls	100	63.62	10.18		



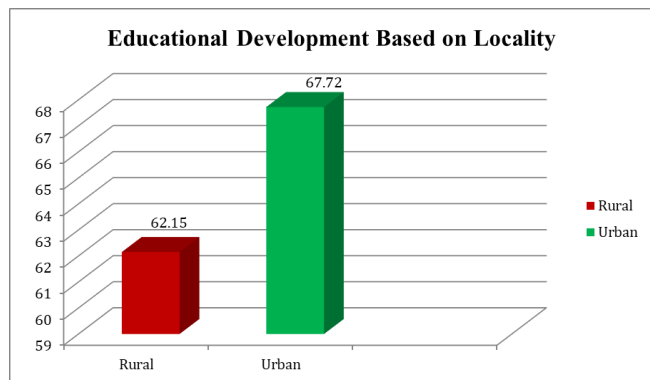
Graph 2:

Interpretation

No significant difference was observed between boys and girls in educational development, indicating that economic constraints affect both genders equally.

Table 3: Educational Development Based on Locality

Locality	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
Rural	120	62.15	9.84	2.94	Significant
Semi-Urban	80	67.72	9.12		



Graph 3:

Interpretation

Students from semi-urban areas show significantly better educational development owing to improved access to schools and facilities.

Table 4: Correlation between Economic Backwardness and Educational Development

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Economic Backwardness & Educational Development	-0.46	0.00	Moderate Negative Correlation

Interpretation

A significant negative correlation indicates that higher economic backwardness leads to lower educational development among the students.

Findings of the Study

1. Most Scheduled Tribe students experience economic backwardness.
2. The levels of educational development are generally low to moderate.
3. Gender did not significantly affect educational development.
4. Locality significantly influences the development of education.
5. Economic backwardness has a negative impact on educational development.

Educational Implications

- Financial assistance schemes should be strengthened to support these families.
- Free access to learning materials and digital resources is essential for this.
- Residential schools and hostels must be expanded to accommodate these children.
- Parental awareness programs should be implemented.
- Continuous academic support is required for tribal students.

Conclusion

This study clearly establishes that economic backwardness is a major barrier to educational development among Scheduled Tribe students in Sri Sathya Sai District. While gender differences are minimal, locality and economic conditions significantly influence the educational outcomes. Addressing economic deprivation through integrated welfare and educational initiatives is crucial to ensure equitable educational development among tribal communities.

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