

The Impact of Education on the Empowerment of Scheduled Caste Women in India : A Systematic Review of the Literature

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Abstract

Education is an instrument for social change; it facilitates uplifting societies and individuals' quality of life. However, before independence, the socioeconomic status of all women in India was very pathetic. Women from low-income families and relevant to the lower ladder of the caste system were classified as scheduled castes or tribes. After independence, women were given the right to go to school.

Education is essential to empower scheduled caste and tribal women in India, especially as they are discriminated against at every level in Indian culture. This review was conducted to synthesize information on the educational status of scheduled caste women and its impact on their empowerment. The main objective of this search was to map existing literature in various disciplines on the impact of education on the empowerment of scheduled caste women in India. The selection criteria were put where they were based on the Prisma statement. For this purpose, 174 studies were selected from Google Scholar and Google search published in 2012–2022 in English and related to the education and empowerment of scheduled caste women in India. The search terminology used in this study was as follows: "educational status" and "Scheduled caste women," "educational status," "Scheduled caste women empowerment," "Dalit women empowerment," and "education." After screening out of a total of 174 research papers, only 4 original full-text research, review, and conference papers were assessed for eligibility in the present study. After analysis of these studies, it was found that there is a scarcity of full-text research papers based on the current topic, and there is more scope for research in this area. This study has found that higher education gives scheduled caste women freedom and helps break superstitions, social taboos, and stigmas. It also improves their financial situation and gives them knowledge about their constitutional rights, respect, and safety.

Keywords: Education, Empowerment, Scheduled Caste women, Education

Introduction

The Hindu population in India is divided into four primary Varna groups: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Indian culture is heavily stratified, with apparent disparities between distinct socio-economic strata. Scheduled castes were pushed to the bottom of the caste hierarchy, where they were considered untouchables by culture and had limited room for upward mobility (Cattell, 1942). As a result, many apparent differences exist among Indian society's socio-economic strata because of their low literacy rate, unemployment, starvation, and lack of active political participation.

Nonetheless, they remain essential members of Indian society, with the scheduled castes accounting for one-sixth of the population. As a result, India will be the primary focus of this study. According to the 2011 Indian Census, 16.6% of India's population belongs to the scheduled caste class, with a literacy rate of 66.07 percent and a female literacy rate of 56.5 percent, lower than 64.6 percent. The scheduled castes make up 18.5 percent of the rural population and 12.6 percent of the urban population. It is worth noting that between 2001 and 2011, India's population rose at a decadal rate of 17.64 percent. According to the 2011 Census, the scheduled castes grew at a decadal rate of 20.8 percent. The sex ratio in India is 943, whereas it is 945 among scheduled castes.

In India, the maximum scheduled caste population lives in rural areas. Rural areas are underdeveloped, and the people there are relatively impoverished. Agriculture is the main occupation of scheduled castes in India. Almost the entire scheduled caste population is involved in agriculture and agricultural labor. The main problems of the scheduled caste are as follows (Hanumanthappa, 2022).

- The problem of the social condition of scheduled castes
- The low economic condition of scheduled castes
- Low educational status of scheduled castes
- There is an increased rate of unemployment in scheduled castes.
- Lack of agricultural land

The social and economic backwardness of scheduled castes, including men and women, is their fundamental issue. The conditions of the scheduled caste are deplorable in society and family among their male counterparts and females of other sections. Several pieces of literature identify the low socio-economic status of the scheduled caste population (Das & Hossain, 2015; Apparaya, 2015; Sangral & Singh, 2018; Sardar, 2020). They had no right to education or property in ancient times. They rely on others because they lack education, money, and land. They take care of him and provide him with some food and clothing. Empowerment is the development of poor people's rights and abilities to make various decisions that influence their lives.

Women's empowerment begins with education, which provides them with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence they need to participate actively in the development process (Bhat, 2015). It contributes to the progress of socio-economic development. Several variables impact women's empowerment in India, including caste, class, family history and culture, geographic location (urban or rural), and age. (*Ten Factors That Affect Women's Economic Empowerment | Council on Foreign Relations*, 2021; Agarwal et al., 2016). The empowerment of scheduled caste women is hampered by social discrimination, economic challenges, religious norms, cultural attitudes, and violence against women (Apparaya & Patil, 2014). They have less access to health and educational resources, are less capable of making decisions, and are more prone to violence. There has been an increase in writing on the importance of education in women's empowerment. However, there has never been researched that looked at a systematic literature review of the influence of education on the empowerment of scheduled caste women using the Prisma approach.

This research examines published studies on the education and empowerment of scheduled caste women in India. As a result, the first step in the study is to look for literature that will help us understand the influence of education on the empowerment of Scheduled Caste women in India and the obstacles they face.

The second body of literature investigates several variables that impact the educational level and empowerment of scheduled caste women in India and the correlation between education and empowerment. Finally, it identifies a unique approach for overcoming the many issues of women's empowerment and education. Consequently, since there are no structured studies on the subject, evaluating the association between education and the empowerment of scheduled caste women is imperative. Filling in this research gap, discussing future topics, and giving critical information for future research are all things we can do with the study we are doing right now, so we will be able to do that.

Methodology

We designed a search scheme to locate literature search approaches tailored to Google Scholar and Google search. The search terminology used was as follows: "educational status" and "Scheduled caste women," "educational status," "Scheduled caste women empowerment," "Dalit women empowerment," and "education." There are many searches in the archives that go from 2012 to 2022. They include full-text journal articles, PDF reviews, and studies only in English.

Selection criteria

The selection criteria were put where they were based on the Prisma statement. The main objective of this search was to map existing literature in social science, sociology, economics, and geography on the impact of education on the empowerment of scheduled caste women. The search was then narrowed to multidisciplinary fields, comprising social science, economics, education, and geography. The investigation was undertaken from 2012 to 2022. Papers published before 2012 were excluded from the search, mainly concentrating on India. At this point, any articles from another country were discarded, leaving just 174 records to be retrieved.

Quality assessment

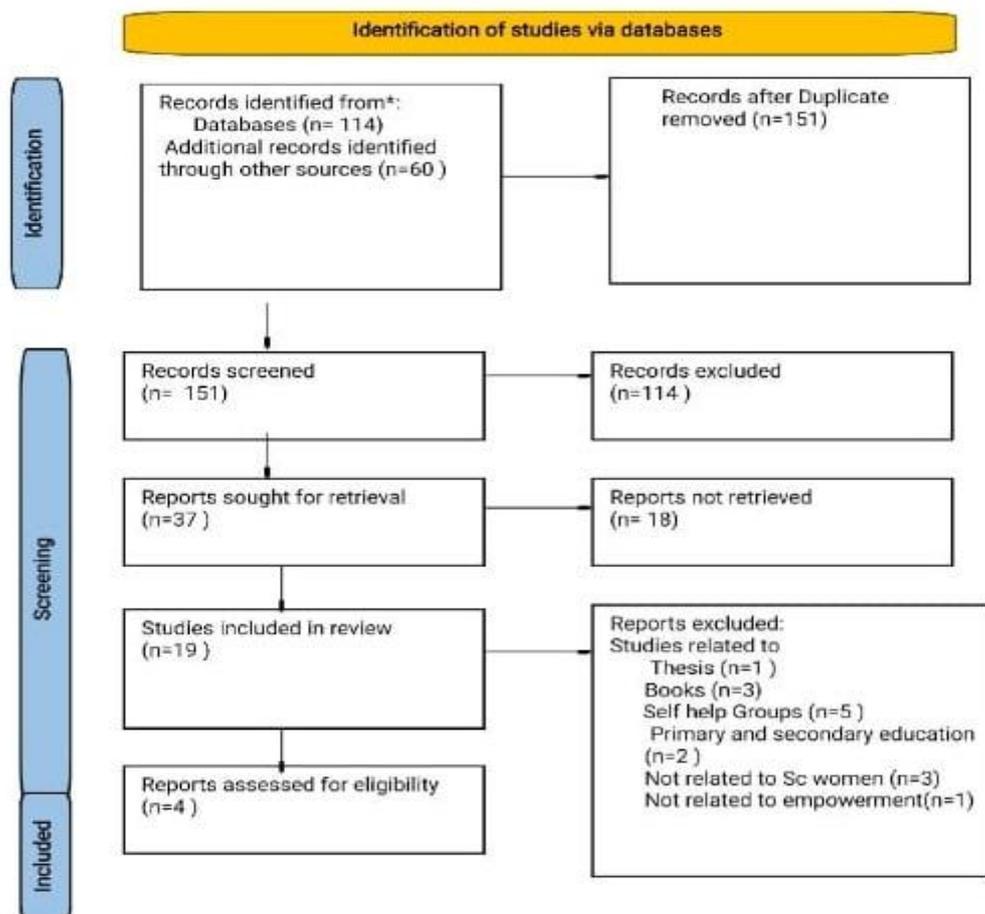
This study depends primarily on original research articles, review papers, and conference papers to maintain the review's quality. First, article abstracts are analyzed and purified using Cheque Deep to guarantee the quality and determinants of academic literature comprising the interview process. Following that, each investigation report was thoroughly examined. The second exclusion criterion was the constraints on research publications published in English only for the study. After being checked for duplicate records, the publications were removed from the study. Based on the exclusion condition mentioned above, we chose 151 items for each round. This study's outcome only represents the selected papers and studies undertaken in India in English.

Data Extraction

Given an article, and the chosen characteristic was

1. The article had to be an original, review, or conference work. Books and thesis case studies were not allowed.
2. The article must be prepared in English and originate from the various disciplines.
3. Between 2012 and 2022, articles were projected to be published.
4. India's paper was the only one that predicted.
5. The study title must include the terms "education/literacy," and "Scheduled caste women, "empowerment," and "Dalit women," "scheduled caste women", "India"

The graphic below depicts the inclusion and exclusion of literature at each level of the Prisma statement (PRISMA, 2020).



Results

Prior studies have noted the strong relationship between education and empowerment. A total of 4 articles were eligible for the assessment based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria mentioned above. It was found that both qualitative and quantitative types of articles from different disciplines are available in the literature, and it was found that out of four papers, three have keywords, and two use Scheduled Caste, women's empowerment, and education in their studies. These 2 articles also include SC and ST in their titles. Only 2 articles are qualitative, 1 from the history discipline and one review article from the arts and humanities. The other two articles are from Education and Geography. One article is based on Scheduled Caste women of rural areas. The 2 articles quantitatively analyze the relationship between education and scheduled caste women's empowerment through primary and secondary data. Three of four studies are devoted to three states: Assam, West Bengal, and Andhra Pradesh. It was found that there is a scarcity of full-text research papers based on the current topic and there is more scope for research in this area.

Conclusion

Before independence, the lives of all women in India were pathetic, deprived, and isolated. They did not have the right to an education under normal circumstances and were only allowed to work in the house and on farms. Women from low-income families were scheduled for Caste and Caste because their last position in Hindu society was more vulnerable to injustice, violence, and no right to wellbeing and decision-making. After independence, owing to the implementation of the Indian constitution, women got the right to education. Moreover, scheduled caste women got a chance to get educated through special reservations and other policies. However, many reasons for depriving women of education include old orthodox thinking, superstition, lack of awareness, and financial poverty. For the above reasons, women could not obtain an education.

Women's roles are significant in today's scientific and digital era. In the present scenario, scheduled caste women play an essential role in social and economic life and other spheres of life with men. Due to this, women must be aware of and encouraged to pursue education to enhance their confidence, position in society, and work efficiency by making new guidelines for scheduled caste by the state and central governments, adopting the old policy and reservation properly, and opening particular inexpensive institutions that will assist scheduled caste women. From this systematic literature review, the findings of this investigation suggest a linkage between education and the empowerment of scheduled caste women. It was also found that

higher education gives scheduled caste women freedom and helps break superstitions, social taboos, and stigmas. It also improves their financial situation and gives them knowledge about their constitutional rights, respect, and safety in society, giving them more power and improving their lives.

However, further research on this subject and other elements must be undertaken before the correlation between education and the empowerment of scheduled caste women is understood more clearly.

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