



SOCIAL STATUS AND AWARENESS OF DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES AMONG SCHEDULED CASTES

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Abstract

At present the Scheduled Castes constituting approximately 16.6 (Census 2011) percent of the total population of India and 25.19 percent of total population of Himachal Pradesh (Census 2011) are an important social formation in the Indian social structure. They are a significantly sizeable and competitive minority in relation to majority constituted by high castes, called caste Hindus or twice born. The special reference to them is made here on account of two dimensions of their past and present conditions. Historically, they have been living under highly exploitative conditions coupled with stigma of untouchability and numerous other disabilities. The Government of India with a view to initiate development process, formulated listed the development priorities including the target groups-scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and others. The general social awakening in human society is a gradual process. However, with consistent rise in the literacy rates and the revolution in information technology, the considerable awakening is taking place with reference to people's rights and freedoms and worldwide propagation of democratic system as a form of national governance. The knowledge and awareness that indicates the degree to which an individual understands facts important to his functioning as an active participant is taking place faster in the recent times. Since awareness is mainly seen in terms of receiving benefits, people therefore resort to institutionalized form of collective expression of their dissatisfaction when the development schemes fail to deliver. In other words both awareness and knowledge make people self confident and capable to form an opinion in accordance with the policies and programmes of the government.

Keywords: Scheduled Caste, Social Status, Knowledge and Awareness.



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Objectives:

To know the social status and social, economic and occupational profile of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries included in study.

The Social status, knowledge and awareness of various schemes of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Methodology

In social sciences methodology has two components. First is conceptual and the second procedural. While the first refers to theoretical formulations, testing of hypotheses and formulation of concepts, the second pertains to the procedures and techniques used in the collection and analysis of data.. From the point of view of both the conceptual as well as

procedural aspects, it is important to base analyses and discussion on certain Common premises. It implies that the nature of question to be asked in the field setting must be in consonance with research objectives and the conceptual requirement. This technique facilitates data collection and its organization. The considered view in this regard is that data collection requires certain degree of self-control on the part of the investigator in the process of addressing questions and recording of the responses.

The study area population has been further found dispersed over a large number of villages spread over a large territory of Himachal Pradesh. These households were further divided into beneficiary and non-beneficiary. The beneficiaries' households are 213 and Non beneficiaries households are 190 in numbers.

The study aims analyzing the relationship between the social status of scheduled caste beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries with the levels of their awareness of various development schemes launched by the Government. There are two underlying assumptions of the relationship. First, as the theories of social stratification suggest, there is a definite relationship between class status of an individual and his knowledge and awareness about a phenomenon. Second, in a caste-stratified society both at the inter-caste and intra-caste level the caste status of the individual seemingly affect knowledge and awareness about a phenomenon. Although this assumption may not hold true in view of ongoing changes in the social structure – i.e. transition from caste to class, but its impact continues to be felt on social structure to a certain extent.

The general social awakening in human society is a gradual process. However, with consistent rise in the literacy rates and the revolution in information technology, the considerable awakening is taking place with reference to people's rights and freedoms and worldwide propagation of democratic system as a form of national governance. The knowledge and awareness that indicates the degree to which an individual understands facts important to his functioning as an active participant is taking place faster in the recent times. Since awareness is mainly seen in terms of receiving benefits, people therefore resort to institutionalized form of collective expression of their dissatisfaction when the development schemes fail to deliver. In other words both awareness and knowledge make people self confident and capable to form an opinion in accordance with the policies and programmes of the government.

There are various means of communication that play significant role in providing information and knowledge to the people. Radio, Television and Newspaper are the main

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source of awareness and knowledge. In the present study attempt has been made to find out the level of awareness and knowledge of the scheduled castes vis-a-vis various policies and programmes initiated under the constitution for their benefit. After the independence, the state of the Himachal Pradesh had initiated efforts to spread knowledge amongst the scheduled castes about various policies and programmes of the government meant for them.

Table 1
Composite Status and Knowledge of Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SJGSY)

Status	Yes	No	Total
Beneficiaries			
Low	17 23.3 %	55 39.9%	72 33.8%
Middle	22 30.1%	50 35.7%	72 33.8%
High	34 46.6%	35 25.0%	69 32.4%
Total	73 100%	140 100%	213 100%
Non-Beneficiaries			
Low	3 15.0%	52 30.6%	55 28.9%
Middle	4 20.0%	64 37.6%	68 35.8%
High	13 65.0%	54 31.8%	67 35.3%
Total	20 100%	170 100%	190 100%

$X^2 = 13.558$ df -4 P < .005 NS; $X^2 = 8.665$ df -2 P < .005. S

Till 1998-99, IRDP was being implemented as a major poverty alleviation programme. Its basic objective was to raise the income of families below poverty line by way of improving their economic status. The families below poverty line were extended financial help in the form of subsidy and loan for the acquisition of income generating assets and creation of additional employment opportunities for them. The objective of SJGSY is to bring the assisted poor families above the poverty line in three years by providing them income-generating assets through a mix of bank credit and government subsidy. The programme is implemented by DRDAs through the panchayat samitis. The process of planning, implementation and monitoring tends to integrate the banks and other financial institutions. The scheme is funded by central and state governments on 75:25 sharing pattern.

The data analysis (Table 1) reveals that only seventy-three beneficiary respondents know about this scheme. Among them 46.6 per cent are in the high status group followed by

30 per cent in the middle and 23.3 per cent in the lowest status group. A large majority of the respondents with no knowledge constitute 39.2 per cent (low status) followed by 35.7 per cent (middle) and 25 per cent (high status). Among the non-beneficiaries only twenty respondents are aware of this scheme, whereas a vast majority is in the high status followed by middle and low status respondents. Among the respondents having knowledge in both categories maximum number come from high and middle status groups. The data thus indicate that level of social status has a positive relationship with knowledge. The statistical measures reveal a significant association of difference.

Table 2
Composite Status and Response Regarding Functions of SJGSY

Status	NA	Yes	No	Total
Beneficiaries				
Low	55 39.9%	17 32.0%	–	72 33.8%
Middle	50 36.2%	22 29.7%	–	72 33.8%
High	33 23.9%	35 47.3%	1 100%	69 32.4%
Total	138 100%	74 100%	1 100%	213 100%
Non-Beneficiaries				
Low	46 30.5%	3 18.8%	6 26.1%	55 28.9%
Middle	56 37.1%	3 18.8%	9 39.1%	68 35.8%
High	49 32.5%	10 62.5%	8 34.8%	67 35.3%
Total	151 100%	16 100%	23 100%	190 100%

$X^2 = 14.892$ df .-4 P <. 005. S; $X^2 = 5.907$ df -2 P > .005. NS

The analysis (Table 2) reveals that among the beneficiaries there is only one respondent belonging to high status who did not know about the functions of the scheme. The respondents who know about its functions approximately, half of them are from the high status group followed by middle and low status group. The data therefore indicate that greater number among the beneficiary segment know about the functioning. Among the non-beneficiaries a maximum number of sixteen respondents know about the functions of the scheme and most among them are from the high status group. There are twenty respondents who do not know about the functions and maximum (39.1 per cent) among them is in the middle and relatively lower number (26.1 per cent) belongs to the low status. While the

statistical analysis in the case of beneficiaries reveal significant differences, the results in the case of non- beneficiaries remain insignificant.

Table 3
Composite Status and Money taken by SJGSY Scheme

Status	Yes	No	Total
Beneficiaries			
Low	16 23.5%	56 38.6%	72 33.8%
Middle	22 32.4%	50 34.5%	72 33.8%
High	30 44.1%	39 26.9%	69 32.4%
Total	68 100%	145 100%	213 100%
Non-Beneficiaries			
Low	-	55 28.9%	55 28.9%
Middle	-	68 35.8%	68 35.8%
High	-	67 35.3%	67 35.3%
Total	-	190 100%	190 100%

$X^2 = 7.419$ df .-2 $P < .005$ S; $X^2 = 3.711$ df -2 $P > .005$. NS

With regard to loans taken under the SJGSY scheme, the data (Table 3) reveals that only sixty-eight respondents among the beneficiaries have availed loan. Among them 44.1 per cent respondents belong to high followed by 32.4 per cent in the middle and 23.5 per cent coming from low status. Those who have not taken any assistance constitute the largest number, comprising 38.6 per cent low status, 34.5 per cent middle and 26.9 per cent high status. Among the beneficiaries no one has taken any assistance under this scheme. The loans have been taken to buy milk cattle, horse, starting new business and opening karyana store, tea stall, small industry, threshing machine and chakki (flour mill). The statistical measurement indicate significant status variations between different status categories and loan availed, among the beneficiaries.

The foregoing discussion on the relationship between social status and awareness and knowledge of development schemes among the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, their need structure and programmes (Schemes) acceptance by them reveals a somewhat mixed scenario. It has been observed that nearly one fourth of the total respondents from both the beneficiary and non-beneficiary are aware of Swaranjanti Green Swarozgar Yojana. Most of these come from high and middle status scheduled caste households. In addition to the said

gainful wage Jawahar Rozgar Yojana has also been restructured and renamed as Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana by the government. The basic minimum services, such as housing to shelter-less, health services, connectivity of villages through rural roads and the public distribution system need also special attention. It is found that maximum number of respondents have taken assistance for the buying of milk cattle and horses. In rural areas most scheduled castes work as labourer in the agriculture sector. A majority of the respondents from the beneficiary group have taken assistance ranging between Rs. 5000/- to 15000/- only. All those who have benefited spend money for the purpose which they take. Most of the illiterate respondents however are not much aware about this newly started scheme.

The loan taken under the SJGSY scheme reveals minimum number of the respondents among the beneficiaries. The loan availed indicates that maximum number belong to high status among the beneficiaries. However, the status differences are not found associated with variations in the amount of loan availed. There are two channels through which financial assistance is taken, namely Village Gram Samiti and Block Development Office. The respondents have used both the channels. In the study area two banks namely Parvatiya Gramin Bank and State Bank of India are the two important financial institutions which extend loan facilities to the people. About similar number among both the categories of sample have attained assistance through State Bank of India and Pravatiya Gramin Bank.

It is further found that the behaviour of officers of the financial institutions towards the beneficiaries respondents is described as good and very good by these respondents. The statistical analysis also reveal significant association between differential status and behavioural response towards the loan seekers. The small number of respondents among the beneficiary and non-beneficiary also state that irrigation scheme have also been started in their areas as well as not stated in their areas respectively.

Nearly all the respondents of the study areas are connected with the educational institutions. Among them half of the respondents state that there is a Primary School in their area followed by middle, high and senior secondary school in the villages of the beneficiary and high school in the non-beneficiary.

CONCLUSION:

Rural development as a whole has, in fact, been a priority ever since independence of the country, due mainly to two reasons, First, almost seventy-four percent of India's population lived in rural areas where agriculture was the main stay of people. Second, to meet the foodgrain needs of the people development and growth of agriculture was essential. Since
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Himachal Pradesh continues to be predominantly rural economy the development of agriculture remains the priority. In the state plan, the emphasis has been laid down on special programmes such as ICDP, SGSY, IREP, JRY, JGSY, employment assurance schemes and Panchayats. It is significant to note here that the shifting of priority has resulted in decline of more than almost half of the financial outlays on IRDP which has been an important area of focus for considerable time. A small number of the respondents, belonging to both the categories of the sample are taking benefit of such schemes. Resultantly, in the case of maximum number of respondents among beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in villages have undeveloped habitats. It is only a minimum number of respondents whose habitats are found developing. The statistical application also reveals an association between status differentials and responses among the beneficiaries.

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