



**ASSESSING THE AWARENESS OF CASTE CERTIFICATE ISSUING BY OFFICES
AMONG SC STUDENTS IN RELATION TO THEIR GENDER AND PARENTAL
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS**

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Abstract

This study investigates the awareness of Scheduled Caste (SC) students about the caste certificate issuance process in South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, and Kolkata districts. Conducted from February to July 2019, the descriptive survey involved 628 SC students and utilized a checklist for data collection. Analysis using MS Excel and percentage calculations revealed insights into the impact of gender and parental socioeconomic status on awareness levels. Findings indicate that factors such as parents' income, father's education, and gender do not significantly affect awareness. However, the mother's education emerged as a significant determinant of students' awareness about the caste certificate issuance process. These results underscore the importance of targeted awareness programs that address economic barriers, highlighting the critical role of mothers' education in enhancing access to benefits for SC students.

Keywords: *Awareness level, Caste Certificate Issuance, SC students, Gender and Parental Socioeconomic Status*

Introduction

India, a democratic nation celebrated for its diversity and plurality, is home to people from myriad socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds, each with its own distinct history and language. Among these diverse groups, Scheduled Castes (SC), also known as Dalits or Sudras, constitute approximately 21% of the population according to the 2011 census. The state-wise distribution reveals that West Bengal has the second-largest SC population, following Uttar Pradesh. Historically disadvantaged, the SC community lags behind in various developmental aspects, making them a focal point for policymakers and researchers. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) conducts periodic surveys on education, including factors affecting SC students. Reports such as the "Social Consumption: Education" (NSS 71st Round, 2014) indicate disparities in educational access and awareness among SC populations. These reports often highlight the challenges SC students face, including lack of awareness about entitlements

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and the procedures to obtain caste certificates. The annual reports by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment often discuss initiatives aimed at increasing awareness among SC communities. For example, the Annual Report 2018-19 mentions programs designed to improve awareness and accessibility of various government schemes, including caste certificates. The reports also note efforts to streamline the process of obtaining caste certificates to ensure that SC students can easily access educational and employment benefits. An evaluation study of the educational development of SC students (2015) by the Ministry of Human Resource Development highlights that while there has been progress in educational development, a significant number of SC students remain unaware of the procedures to obtain caste certificates. It emphasizes the need for awareness programs and improved dissemination of information to ensure SC students can take full advantage of government schemes. Despite significant government expenditure on these initiatives, many SC students remain unaware of the available benefits. Raja Gopalan (1974) notes that higher secondary SC students often opt for arts over science due to financial constraints and a lack of awareness about stipend schemes. Obtaining these benefits involves navigating official formalities, such as acquiring a caste certificate and understanding application procedures, which often require parental and school authority involvement in rural areas. However, there has been a dearth of extensive research into the awareness levels of Scheduled Caste students regarding this caste certificate issuing in which office and the processes required to avail themselves of the certificates. This study aims to fill that gap, examining the awareness among SC students about caste certificate issuing offices concerning gender and parental socioeconomic status.

Literature Review

Several studies have highlighted issues related to caste certificates and the educational challenges faced by Scheduled Castes (SC). Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (2019) report highlights various initiatives aimed at improving socio-economic conditions and educational access for SC communities. Ministry of Human Resource Development (2015) evaluation study shows improvements in enrolment but underscores gaps in quality and infrastructure. National Sample Survey Office (2014) from the NSSO 71st Round reveals persistent educational inequalities, particularly in rural areas. Census of India (2011) further indicates lower literacy and higher dropout rates among SC students. Verma and Kaur (2017) identified significant gaps in the implementation of educational schemes in Punjab, including a lack of trained teachers, improper funds disbursement, and the non-availability of textbooks. Chouhan (2013) pointed out that despite constitutional provisions, SCs in West Bengal lag in literacy and education due to early-age marriage, gender bias, child labor, and socio-economic deprivation. Singh and Pandey (2011) discussed the impact of affirmative action measures, such as reservation policies, in dismantling inequalities and aiding economic development. Sahoo (2002) focused on the Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme, revealing issues like irregular payments and insufficient scholarship amounts, calling for improvements in payment regularity and adequacy. Pai (2000) emphasized the need for comprehensive strategies to address challenges faced by SCs, including limited land, low literacy rates, and limited urbanization. Raja Gopalan(1974)emphasizes the historical barriers and the need for sustained efforts to promote equitable education These studies collectively underscore the need for effective implementation and reform of policies and schemes to improve educational outcomes and socio-economic conditions for SC communities. Hence, going through all the studies, schemes and policies done by various authors, the researcher found out there is a lack of consciousness and awareness among SC students about caste certificate issue by Government offices in relation to gender and socioeconomic status.

Objectives of the Study: To find out the percentage of awareness and unawareness among SC Students about the Caste Certificate issuing by offices in the relation to Gender and Parental Socioeconomic Status.

Methodology: The present study adopts a descriptive approach, focusing on the current awareness of Scheduled Caste (SC) students in relation to their gender and parental socioeconomic status. A survey design, a crucial aspect of descriptive research, has been employed to carry out this investigation.

Population: The population for this study comprises SC students (both boys and girls) attending government-aided secondary schools in the districts of South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, and Kolkata in West Bengal. The target group includes all SC students from classes IX, X, XI, and XII in Bengali medium government-aided secondary schools across West Bengal, India.

Sample: Given the survey nature of the research and the challenge of including all SC students, the sample was selected through a multi-stage process:

1. Area Sampling Technique: Three districts (South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, and Kolkata) were chosen out of the 23 districts in West Bengal.
2. Random Selection of Schools: From the selected districts, 10 schools from each district were randomly chosen from the total secondary schools.
3. Student Sample: All SC students in these selected schools were included, total 628 students.

Procedure, Tools and Techniques of Data Collection: Data collection took approximately six to seven months, from February to July 2019. After identifying the schools in the respective districts, the researcher met with the headmasters to request their cooperation. The headmasters provided lists of SC students and arranged rooms for data collection. On the scheduled days, the researcher explained the purpose and procedure to the students before administering the checklist. The collected data were then scored based on students' awareness (1 for aware and 0 for unaware), and responses were tabulated according to demographic variables such as gender, father's income, father's education, mother's income, and mother's education. Data analysis was conducted in two parts: a descriptive analysis, which calculated the percentage of aware and unaware students and presented the data graphically using bar graphs, and an inferential statistical analysis, using a chi-square test to determine the significant effects of demographic variables on students' awareness.

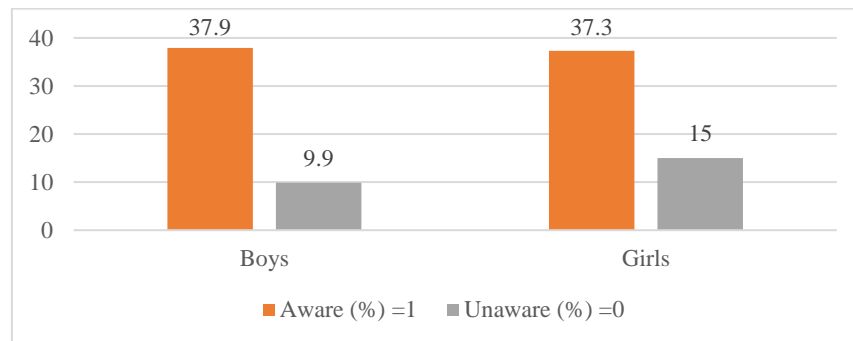
Data analysis and interpretation of the descriptive part:

Distribution of Awareness about Caste Certificate issuing office in relation to Gender and Parental Socioeconomic Status:

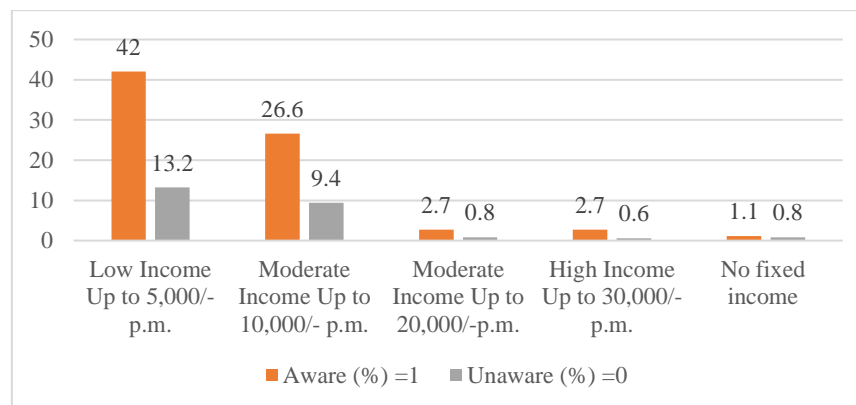
Student's Demography	Level		Aware (%)	Unaware (%)
Gender	Boys		37.9	9.9
	Girls		37.3	15
Father Income	Low Income	Up to 5,000/- p.m.	42	13.2
	Moderate Income	Up to 10,000/- p.m.	26.6	9.4
		Up to 20,000/-p.m.	2.7	0.8
	High Income	Up to 30,000/- p.m.	2.7	0.6
	No fixed income			1.1
Father Education	Primary	Lower primary	23.2	8.1
		Upper primary	20.4	5.3
	Secondary	Secondary	13.4	5.3
		Higher secondary	5.7	1.1
	Higher education			3.8

	Illiterate		8.6	3.8
Mother Income	Low Income	Up to 5,000/- p.m.	8.1	5.7
	Moderate Income	Up to 10,000/- p.m.	2.1	0.6
		Up to 20,000/-p.m.	0.3	0.2
	High Income	Up to 30,000/- p.m.	Unavailable sample	Unavailable sample of
	No fixed income		64.4	18.3
Mother Education	Primary	Lower primary	23.9	7.2
		Upper primary	17.2	6.2
	Secondary	Secondary	14.5	5.4
		Higher secondary	7	1.1
	Higher education		1.8	0.6
	Illiterate		10.4	4.3
Total			75.2	24.8

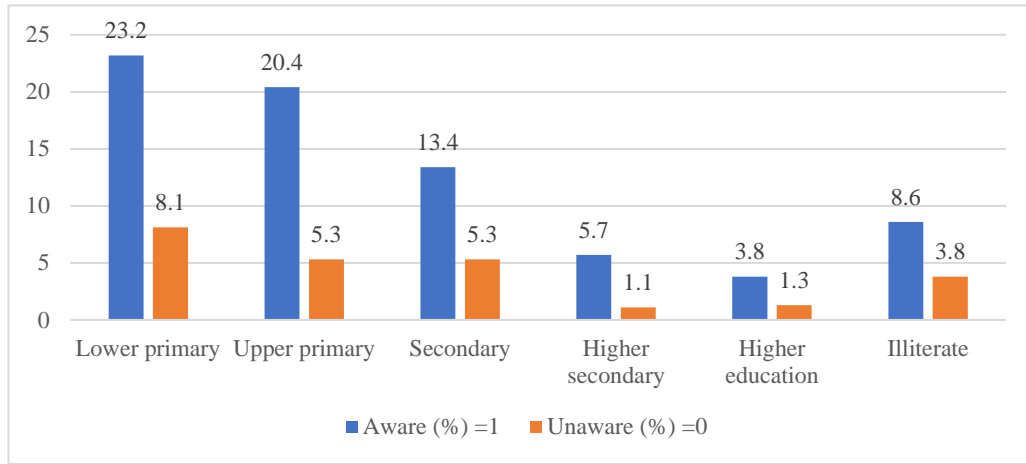
Graph on student's awareness about caste certificate issuance in offices



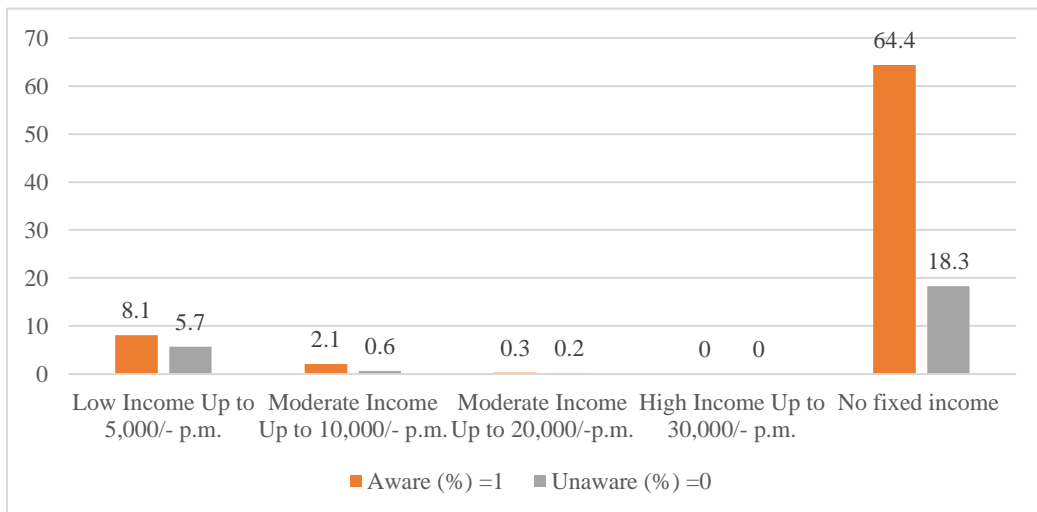
Gender wise awareness



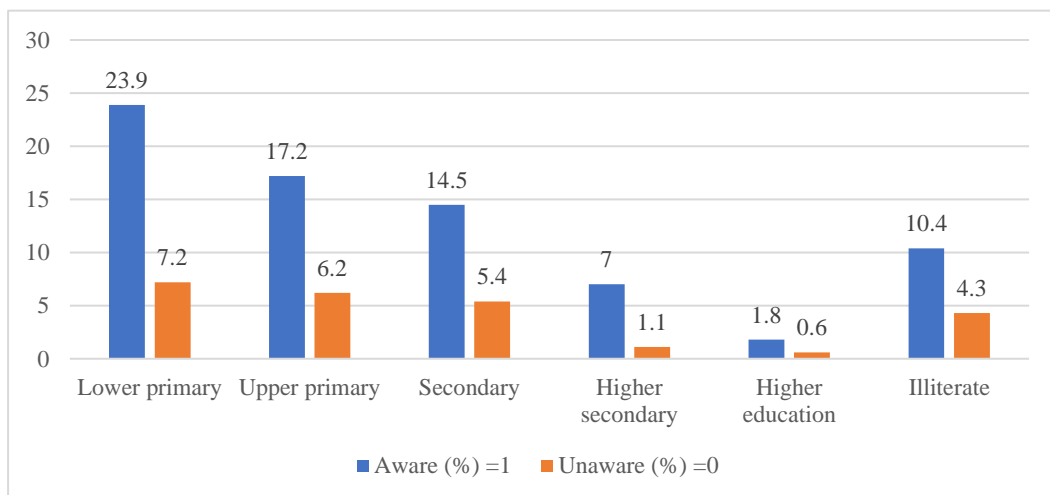
Father income wise awareness



Father education wise awareness



Mother income wise awareness



Mother education wise awareness

The above table is intended to depict the percentage of awareness and unawareness among SC students regarding the issuing of Caste Certificates in the office, with respect to their gender, father's and mother's income, and educational status.

It is revealed that 75.2% of SC students are aware, while 24.8% are unaware of the source and application process for caste certificate issuance. Examining gender-wise distribution, it is found that 37.9% of boys and 37.3% of girls are aware of the Caste Certificate issuing process in the office.

Regarding awareness levels based on the father's income, it is observed that 42% of SC students with a father's income up to 5000/- per month are aware, followed by 26.6% with a father's income up to 10000/-, 2.7% with a father's income up to 20000/-, 2.7% with a father's income up to 30000/-, and 1.1% with fathers having either no fixed income or earning below 5000/- per month.

In terms of the father's educational status and its impact on SC students' awareness of Caste Certificate issuing in the office, it is found that 23.2% of students are aware if their fathers have an educational qualification up to lower primary, followed by 20.4% for fathers educated up to upper primary, 13.4% for fathers with a secondary education, 5.7% for fathers educated up to higher secondary, 3.8% for highly educated fathers, and 8.6% for students whose fathers are illiterate.

Regarding the awareness level based on mother's income, it is discovered that 8.1% of students are aware if their mother's income is up to 5000/- per month, 2.1% if it's up to 10,000 /- per month and 0.3% if it's up to 20,000/- per month, with no samples found in the 30,000/- per month category. Additionally, 64.4% are aware if their mothers have either no fixed income or earn below 5000/- per month.

In the context of the mother's educational status, the distribution of awareness among SC students about the Caste Certificate issued in the office reveals that 23.9% are aware if their mothers have an educational qualification up to lower primary, 17.2% if educated up to upper primary, 14.5% if studied up to secondary, 7.0% if educated up to higher secondary, 1.8% if their mothers are highly educated, and 10.8% if their mothers are illiterate.

Data analysis and interpretation of inferential part

H0₁: There is no significant effect of student's gender and parental socioeconomic status on SC student's awareness about the official procedure for application of caste certificate

Table on Students Awareness about the official procedure for application of caste certificate:

Variable	Level	Aware		Unaware		Chi-Square	df	Significance	Remarks
		Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency				
Gender	Boys	238	225.5	62	74.5	5.360	1	.013	significant
	Girls	234	246.5	94	81.5				
	Up to 5,000/- p.m.	264	260.8	83	86.2				

Fathers Income	Up to 10,000 /- p.m.	167	169.9	59	56.1	2.601	4	.627	Not significant
	Up to 20,000 /-p.m.	17	16.5	5	5.5				
	Up to 30,000 /- p.m.	17	15.8	4	5.2				
	No fixed income	7	9	5	3				
Fathers Education	Lower primary	146	148.1	51	48.9	5.609	5	.346	Not significant
	Upper primary	128	121	33	40				
	Secondary	84	87.9	33	29.1				
	Higher secondary	36	32.3	7	10.7				
	Higher education	24	24.1	8	7.9				
	Illiterate	54	58.6	24	19.4				
Mothers Income	Up to 5,000/- p.m.	51	65.4	36	21.6	15.015	3	.002	significant
	Up to 10,000 /- p.m.	13	12.8	4	4.2				
	Up to 20,000 /-p.m.	2	2.3	1	.7				
	Up to 30,000 /- p.m.	-	-	-	-				
	No fixed income	406	391.6	115	156				
Mothers Education	Lower primary	150	146.6	45	48.5	5.20	5	.391	Not significant
	Upper primary	111	112.7	39	37.3				

Secondary	91	93.9	34	31.1	8	e
Higher secondary	44	38.3	7	12.7		
Higher education	11	11.3	4	3.7		
Illiterate	65	69.1	27	22.9		

Analysis of inferential part: It is found from the above table that the calculated χ^2 (chi-square) value for gender difference is 5.360, which is less than the probability value at the 0.05 level of significance. So the null hypothesis is not rejected. It is found that gender has no significant effect on caste certificate issuing in which office.

Concerning the effect of father's income on caste certificate issuing in which office, it is found that the calculated χ^2 (chi-square) value is 2.601, which is less than the 0.05 probability level. So the null hypothesis is not rejected. It can be interpreted that father's income has no significant effect on SC students' awareness and unawareness about caste certificate issuing in which office.

Similarly, for the effect of father's education on caste certificate issuing in which office, the calculated χ^2 (chi-square) value is 5.609, which is less than the 0.05 probability level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. It can be interpreted that father's education has no significant effect on SC students' awareness and unawareness about caste certificate issuing in which office.

Moving on to the effect of mother's income on caste certificate issuing in which office, the calculated χ^2 (chi-square) value is 15.015, which is less than the 0.05 probability level. So the null hypothesis is not rejected. It can be interpreted that mother's income has no significant effect on SC students' awareness and unawareness about caste certificate issuing in which office.

Lastly, for the effect of mother's education on caste certificate issuing in which office, the calculated χ^2 (chi-square) value is 5.208, which is less than the 0.05 probability level. So the null hypothesis is not rejected. It can be interpreted that mother's education has no significant effect on SC students' awareness and unawareness about caste certificate issuing in which office.

Summary and Conclusion

The study reveals a significant level of awareness (75.2%) among SC students regarding the caste certificate issuance process, with 24.8% remaining unaware. Gender analysis shows nearly equal awareness between boys (37.9%) and girls (37.3%). However, the impact of parental socioeconomic status varies. Awareness is highest among students whose fathers have a low income (up to Rs. 5000 per month) and decreases as income increases. Similarly, father's education shows the highest awareness among students whose fathers have lower primary education. Mother's income plays a crucial role, with the highest awareness among students whose mothers have no fixed income or earn up to Rs. 5000 per month. Mother's education shows the highest awareness among students whose mothers have lower primary education. Inferential analysis indicates that gender, father's income, and father's education do not significantly affect awareness. Conversely, mother's income significantly impacts awareness, while mother's education does not.

So we can say that, several factors influence SC students' awareness of the caste certificate issuance process, mother's income stands out as a significant determinant. This insight emphasizes the need for targeted awareness programs addressing economic barriers to improve access to benefits for SC students.

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