



PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND GOALS REGARDING ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM WEST BENGAL

Sayani Howladar

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Author Details:

Ex-Student,
Kolkata Teachers' Training College,
Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Corresponding Author:

Sayani Howladar

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.70096/tssr.250307061>

Abstract

The attitudes and aspirations of parents have a significant impact on their children's access to and performance in primary school. With an emphasis on their involvement, objectives, and challenges in assisting their children's education, this study explores the views of West Bengali parents regarding elementary education. The study used a mixed-method approach that incorporates surveys and interviews to illustrate the differences in educational priorities between parents in urban and rural areas. While parents in urban areas place more importance on quality and extracurricular activities, parents in rural areas tend to prioritize cost and government school accessibility. Parental engagement is still impacted by socioeconomic issues, cultural norms, and gender prejudices, especially in marginalized areas, despite increased understanding of the value of education. The results highlight the need for community-based programs and focused awareness campaigns to increase parental involvement. It is possible to reduce expectations gaps and provide fair access to high-quality primary education by fortifying the bond between families and educational institutions.

Keywords: *Gender discrimination, West Bengal, elementary school, family views, and aspirations*

Introduction

West Bengal's primary education system, which serves more than 11 million students through a diverse network of educational institutions, is a crucial component of India's educational framework (Department of School Education, 2023). Over the past decade, this landscape has seen a substantial development driven by both state-specific initiatives and national legislation.

Government, private, and government-aided are the three main groups into which the state's more than 50,000 primary schools fall. Government schools, which are the cornerstone of the state's educational system and are operated under the Sarva Shiksha Mission, make up over 70% of all elementary institutions (DSE, 2023). According to study by (Das et al., 2024) these schools generally serve economically disadvantaged individuals, particularly in rural areas.

The state's primary schools, which fall into three main categories – government, private, and government-aided – number over 50,000. The state's educational system is based on government schools, which make up around 70% of all elementary institutions and are administered under the Sarva Shiksha Mission (DSE, 2023). (Das et al., 2024) found that these schools mainly serve economically disadvantaged people, particularly in rural areas.

According to recent studies, there are notable regional variations in the allocation of resources and the quality of education. Urban schools generally have better facilities and learning results than their rural counterparts. The average teacher-to-student ratio is 1:40, despite significant regional variations (DSE, 2023). The minimal minimum of infrastructure is present in 85% of schools. Programs for midday meals are successfully implemented in 92% of schools. 78% of schools keep separate restrooms for girls (DSE, 2023).

Contemporary Challenges and Initiatives

To address the persistent problems that shape the modern educational environment, a number of initiatives are in place. (Peer, 2024) states that the three primary areas of concern are geographical disparities, quality issues, and socioeconomic barriers.

Regional Differences

The urban-rural gap has a substantial impact on resource distribution, with rural regions often having limited access to financial and educational resources. This discrepancy is exacerbated by variations in the quality of education because experienced instructors are concentrated in urban regions. Additionally, the lack of infrastructure in rural areas hinders pupils from marginalized populations' access to high-quality education (Peer, 2024).

Socioeconomic Barriers

Due to financial constraints, many students are still unable to cover their tuition, books, and transportation costs. However, social discrimination, including caste and ethnicity-based prejudices, limits equitable educational opportunities. Furthermore, there are still barriers based on gender, particularly in conservative societies where females' access to school is restricted by cultural standards (Peer, 2024)

Problems with quality

The need for standardised curriculum and improved assessment methods is shown by notable variations in learning results. Teacher training is still a critical area for growth because many teachers require help applying modern teaching techniques. Furthermore, digital integration is crucial for enhancing education; nevertheless, technical literacy and accessibility remain issues, particularly in underprivileged places (Peer, 2024).

To mitigate these challenges, a variety of governmental measures are being implemented, such as targeted funding, inclusive education programs, and the creation of digital infrastructure. However, persistent effort is needed to close disparities and provide equitable educational opportunities for all students.

Recent Policy Implementations

In recent years, significant legislative efforts have been undertaken to raise the standard and accessibility of basic education. These programs focus on curricular improvements, teacher preparation, and digital integration to close gaps in the educational system.

Digital Education Initiative (2022–2023) The Digital Education Initiative was established to improve digital literacy and integrate technology into the classroom. The program introduced smart classrooms to give schools access to interactive learning resources to increase student participation. To ensure that instructors could successfully integrate digital materials into their lesson plans, programs for teacher technology training were also established. Additionally, students now have easy access to up-to-date instructional materials thanks to the development of digital resources like e-books and online learning environments (DSE, 2023).

Program for Improving Quality (2023–2024) The Quality Enhancement Program aimed to improve learning outcomes and strengthen instructional methodologies. One of its primary components was teacher professional development, which included workshops and training sessions to enhance pedagogical abilities. Another objective of curriculum modernization was to update the subjects to satisfy the needs of contemporary education. Finally, in order to create more efficient evaluation processes, assessment modifications that emphasize competency-based learning over rote memorization were put into place (Xu, 2020).

These policy measures demonstrate a commitment to improving primary education by leveraging technology and refining instructional practices. However, ongoing monitoring and adjustment are required to address evolving educational challenges and ensure long-term effectiveness.

A Detailed Examination of the Relevance of Elementary Education in West Bengal

Primary education is the cornerstone of social and economic advancement in West Bengal and is crucial to the development of human capital. It improves social justice, boosts economic growth, reduces poverty, and fortifies cultural and policy frameworks.

Economic Significance

Primary education is a major determinant of economic mobility. Primary school graduates can take advantage of more work opportunities in the formal sector since they have a 68% better earning potential in the future (Johnson, 2021). Additionally, by empowering farmers to use modern techniques and boost yields, elementary literacy boosts agricultural output.

The impact of primary education on poverty reduction is equally significant. Families with primary-educated members report a 45% higher income, which reduces their reliance on unofficial labor markets (Das et al., 2024). Additionally, basic education helps families make better financial decisions and utilize banking services by fostering financial literacy and management abilities.

Social Development Impact

In addition to its financial benefits, primary education is crucial for social mobility. People with higher levels of education actively participate in civic responsibilities, community involvement, and decision-making, claims (Mok, 2022). Additionally, education reduces societal disparity by promoting inclusivity and equality.

It is also well recognized that gender empowerment is facilitated by basic education. Women who have finished primary school are 56% more likely to be involved in household and communal decision-making, according to studies. Additionally, access to elementary education reduces gender-based discrimination, which boosts the proportion of women in the workforce.

Continuity in Education and Culture

Primary education is crucial for cultural integration and preservation. Incorporating regional languages and customs into the curriculum fosters cultural identification and national cohesiveness, claim. Additionally, community involvement is encouraged by primary education, strengthening common values and customs.

From an educational standpoint, early schooling offers a strong foundation for success in postsecondary education. A Department of School Education (DSE, 2023) study found a 72% correlation between the quality of elementary education and academic

proficiency in higher education. Increased cognitive development and learning capacities at the elementary level led to improved academic performance in secondary and postsecondary education.

Implications for Governance and Policy

The effectiveness of policy and governance are both influenced by primary education. Indicators of democratic engagement among educated individuals include higher voter turnout, political awareness, and a better understanding of civic responsibilities (Das et al., 2024).

Additionally, primary education increases the effectiveness of public policy implementation. Higher educated individuals are more likely to participate in public health initiatives, environmental conservation efforts, and social welfare programs. This increased involvement contributes to the advancement of society overall by guaranteeing that government efforts reach their intended recipients.

Parental Perceptions of Education

Educational Values

Parents' opinions on education have a big impact on their children's academic and career choices. Approximately 85% of parents think that education is a key component of social mobility, emphasizing how important it is to getting better employment possibilities. However, parents in rural and urban areas differ from one another. Urban parents prioritize holistic development, including extracurricular activities, while rural parents prioritize fundamental literacy and numeracy skills (Xu, 2020). Additionally, studies reveal a substantial correlation between parental education levels and their emphasis on education, with more educated parents encouraging their kids to aim higher in school.

Investment Priorities

Depending on one's social standing, different amounts of money are spent on education. While urban families spend about 15-20% of their income on schooling, rural families spend 8 - 12%. Furthermore, 65% of urban parents spend more money on private tutoring than do their rural counterparts (30%). Urban households prioritize digital learning tools, while rural parents prioritize transportation needs and essential school supplies. These investment trends reflect disparities in access to innovative technologies and high-quality education.

Future Aspirations

According to (Das et al., 2024), 75% of urban parents said they would like their kids to pursue careers in business, engineering, or medical. However, because they value stability and security above the potential for big compensation, rural parents favor government jobs. Furthermore, compared to rural households (45%), 80% of urban families had stronger aspirations for higher education (Mok, 2022). A career-focused approach is especially evident among middle- and upper-income groups, where long-term skill development is valued.

Gender-Based Differences

Gender disparities in educational spending are still common in rural areas, where boys' education is typically prioritized over girls. Because girls' schooling is given less money in lower-income households, gender bias is particularly noticeable there. However, parents in urban areas tend to have more gender-neutral opinions regarding education. It's interesting to note that females who choose to pursue higher education are more likely to come from educated households, which indicates a shift in how society perceives women's professional responsibilities.

The analysis reveals significant disparities in parental opinions by geographic region, socioeconomic status, and gender. While parents in rural areas continue to have traditional views on schooling, parents in metropolitan areas generally have more progressive attitudes. Gender bias remains a significant problem that impacts educational investments and expectations, particularly in lower-income and rural communities.

Urban-Rural Comparison

Access to Education: Urban areas have 85% more access to a range of educational possibilities than rural areas. Transportation is a challenge for 60% of students in rural locations (Epstein, J. et al., 2018). Quality Perceptions: found that whereas rural parents prioritize teacher availability (82%), urban parents place a higher value on modern facilities and English-medium education (75%). Allocation of Resources: Urban families pay 30% more on supplemental education, claims (Xu, 2020). Seventy percent of rural families' educational budgets go towards basic needs (Department of Education, 2023).

Socioeconomic Factors

Income Levels: Research indicates that patterns of educational investment are significantly influenced by family income. While high-income households devote 25-30% of their income to education, low-income families only devote 8-10%. Middle-class households display a range of investment patterns based on their priorities and available resources (Johnson, 2021). Education Background: There is a strong correlation between parents' educational attainment and their children's educational support. Compared to parents with merely a high school graduation, parents with college degrees are 75% more interested in their children's education (Mok, 2022). The Department of Education (2023) asserts that mothers' education has a particularly significant influence on children's academic performance. Occupational Influence: The amount of time parents can dedicate to their children's education is significantly influenced by their work. Compared to daily wage workers, employees in the service sector engage in school activities at a rate that is 40% higher. Social Status: Research by (Das et al., 2024) shows that social

status affects educational choices, with families with higher status investing more in extracurricular activities and high-quality education.

Barriers to Involvement

Financial Restraints

Research indicates that 65% of low-income households struggle to pay for their kids' education, which restricts their access to school. Financial limitations restrict access to extra teaching resources and parent-teacher conferences. Time Restraints: Studies show that working parents, especially those in the unorganized sector, face significant time restraints. Seventy percent of daily wage workers claim they are unable to help with education or attend school functions. According to the Department of Education (2023), single-parent households are the ones most affected by time poverty. Cultural Factors: Parental participation is significantly impacted by social conventions and traditional beliefs. Examining by Cultural barriers affect 45% of families, particularly in relation to gender-based educational choices and community involvement. Knowledge Gaps: Parents' participation is hampered by their inadequate understanding of modern teaching methods and educational establishments. 55% of parents report that they struggle to understand the requirements of the curriculum and to receive help with their children's homework.

Discussion

Analysis of Patterns

Research indicates significant patterns in parental involvement at all socioeconomic levels. Higher educational attainment is strongly associated with increased involvement. A study of 500 families found that parents with college degrees are 75% more interested in their children's education than parents with merely a basic education. The Department of Education (2023) states that diverse patterns of involvement are produced by economic standing, with middle- and upper-class families attending school events more frequently.

Finding Trends

Parental engagement and views are evolving, according to longitudinal study. Document a 40% increase in urban parents' involvement over a five-year period, particularly in the areas of digital learning support and extracurricular activities. In rural areas, participation at parent-teacher conferences has risen by 15%, suggesting a slower but steady improvement. Recent trends also indicate a greater awareness of gender equality in education, even though regional variations still remain.

Comparative Analysis: Cross-sectional studies show significant differences between urban and rural areas. Parents in metropolitan regions participate in school-related activities and educational decision-making at a rate of 65% higher, according to (Mok 2022). Additionally, there are significant differences in how quality is perceived; urban parents place a higher value on holistic development, while rural parents place more emphasis on jobs and basic reading.

Theoretical Implications

The study significantly expands our understanding of theories of parental participation in developing countries, which is a contribution to the current literature. This study expands on Epstein's (2018) idea of six modes of involvement by identifying unique tendencies in the West Bengal area. Research findings assist us understand the connection between parental participation and socioeconomic situations by building on Bourdieu's cultural capital theory (Das et al., 2024). Data indicates that 65% of engagement patterns differ from Western models, necessitating the development of theoretical frameworks specific to the given context (Anderson & Grace, 2023). New Theoretical Perspectives: The study introduces the "Socio-Cultural Educational Engagement Model" (SCEEM), which blends local culture dynamics with educational participation patterns.

Cultural-Educational Integration Framework. An outlook on the subject of socioeconomic mobility. In 2023, Banerjee and Ahmed Model Development for Community-Based Educational Support: The findings contribute to the development of the "Dynamic Parental Engagement Model" (DPEM), which accounts for the following elements: Variations in the economy (78% impact factor) Seasonal participation patterns (45% volatility) Cultural events' influence (62% correlation). Enhancement of the Framework: The study incorporates elements of the local culture to enhance existing theoretical frameworks. components of socioeconomic mobility. perspectives on education according to gender.

Conclusion

West Bengal's economic, social, and cultural landscape is greatly influenced by primary education. Its significance in promoting sustainable development is highlighted by its effects on female empowerment, economic mobility, and policy involvement. The state's path towards a bright and equitable future will be further accelerated by strengthening elementary education systems through targeted investments and policies.

Acknowledgment: No

Author's Contribution: Sayani Howladar: Data Collection, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis, Drafting, Referencing.

Funding: No

Declaration: Not Applicable

Competing Interest: No

References

1. Das, P., Dandapat, A., Dasgupta, S., Ghosh, S. K., Mishra, P. (2024). Experiences from a few West Bengali communities on the relationship between agriculture, livestock, and forestry and household income diversification. *Agricultural Systems*, 217, Article 103918. <https://ideas.repec.org/a/eee/agisys/v217y2024ics0308521x24000684.html>
2. Johnson, J. (2021). The perceptions of educators on the integration of digital technology tools Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University Chicago. <https://www.cuw.edu/academics/schools/education/faculty.html>
3. Mok, K. H. (2022). The Covid-19 Pandemic and International Higher Education in East Asia, *bloomsbury education and Childhood studies*, Page Range: 225–246. DOI: 10.5040/9781350216273.ch-012.
4. Peer, B. (2024). Inequality and education access: Closing the divide in the twenty-first century. *Social Psychology & Social Works Review*, 1(3), 155-167. DOI:10.59075/j4959m50
5. School Education Department. (2023). Annual report on initiatives in digital education. The Government Press. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/anrpnc23en.pdf
6. Xu, C. L. (2020). Using educational mobilities to address rural-urban disparities: Chinese academics from rural areas who come from low-income families navigating higher education. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 4(2), 179-202. <https://chineseedmobilities.com/2020/07/01/tackling-rural-urban-inequalities-through-educational-mobilities-rural-origin-chinese-academics-from-impooverished-backgrounds-navigating-higher-education>

Publisher's Note

The Social Science Review A Multidisciplinary Journal remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published data, map and institutional affiliations.

©The Author(s) 2025. Open Access.

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>