

A Study On Socio-Economic Condition Of Matuya Community In North 24 Pargana, West Bengal

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Abstract

This study examines the socio-economic conditions of the Matuya community in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, focusing on key aspects such as income levels, education, healthcare access, and employment. The Matuya community, traditionally engaged in agriculture and fishing, has experienced significant socio-economic changes over the years. This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of these changes, highlighting both improvements and ongoing challenges.

Keywords: Matuya community, socio-economic conditions, North 24 Parganas, income levels, education, healthcare access, employment.

Introduction

The Matuya community, primarily located in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, has a long history of marginalization, facing socio-economic barriers that have restricted their access to essential resources and opportunities. Traditionally, the Matuya people have lived in poverty, with limited involvement in formal education, employment, and healthcare systems. This marginalization has resulted in a cycle of socio-economic challenges that have hindered the community's development.

In recent years, however, several initiatives and government programs have aimed at improving the living standards of the Matuya community. These efforts have targeted key areas such as education, healthcare, and employment, which are critical to breaking the cycle of poverty. The community has seen notable improvements, particularly in educational attainment and income levels, as a result of these interventions. Local educational institutions, vocational training programs, and skill development initiatives have empowered individuals with the tools necessary to secure better job opportunities.

Despite these positive changes, significant challenges remain. Healthcare access continues to be inadequate, with many individuals unable to access affordable medical services. The economic stability of the community is also fragile, as many families still rely on informal, low-paying jobs that do not offer long-term financial security.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of the current socio-economic status of the Matuya community, examining the progress made and identifying areas where further support is needed. By highlighting both achievements and ongoing struggles, the study will offer insights into how targeted interventions can further uplift this historically marginalized community.

Review of Literature

Studies on the socio-economic conditions of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in West Bengal have focused on understanding the progress made in terms of education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, while also examining the persistent challenges these communities continue to face. The literature highlights both advancements and limitations, providing a nuanced view of the socio-economic realities of marginalized groups such as the Matuya community.

Bhatia (2005) conducted an extensive study on the socio-economic status of Scheduled Castes in West Bengal, emphasizing the persistent inequalities in accessing education, employment, and healthcare. Despite improvements in literacy rates over the years, the study reveals that SC communities, including the Matuya, continue to face discrimination in educational institutions, leading to lower enrollment and retention rates. Furthermore, the study points out that while there is an increase in literacy, the quality of education remains uneven, with many schools in rural areas lacking adequate infrastructure and trained teachers. The challenges in accessing formal employment are also significant, as individuals from SC backgrounds often encounter systemic barriers in the job market, resulting in lower-income levels and limited career advancement.

Sen (2012) explores the role of government welfare policies in promoting social justice for marginalized communities. While acknowledging the positive impact of policies such as reservation in education and employment, Sen highlights the inconsistencies in the implementation of these policies across regions. In the case of the Matuya community, Sen argues that although welfare schemes have been designed to provide financial assistance and social support, the actual benefits often do not reach the intended recipients due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of awareness, and corruption. This leads to gaps in the overall well-being of the community, particularly in accessing quality healthcare and education.

Chakraborty (2017) examines the impact of migration and entrepreneurship on the economic mobility of Scheduled Caste communities. His research suggests that migration for work, particularly to urban centers, has provided some members of the Matuya community with better economic opportunities. Many individuals have found employment in industries such as construction, domestic work, and small-scale services. Additionally, small entrepreneurship, particularly in the form of local businesses such as grocery stores and tailoring shops, has allowed some individuals to gain economic independence. However, Chakraborty notes that these forms of economic mobility are limited and precarious. The community still faces financial hardships, with many individuals unable to access formal loans or capital for business expansion. The informal nature of these employment opportunities often results in low wages and job insecurity.

Das & Ghosh (2019) focus on the improvement in access to basic healthcare and education for SC communities in West Bengal. Their study acknowledges the improvements made over the years, particularly in rural areas where government initiatives have expanded the reach of healthcare services and educational institutions. However, the study also points out that the quality of these services remains inadequate compared to the general population. Access to quality healthcare facilities is still limited, with many individuals in the Matuya community having to rely on low-cost and often inadequate medical services. Similarly, although enrollment rates in schools have increased, the quality of education remains a challenge, with many students from marginalized communities struggling to keep up due to a lack of resources and support.

Objectives

- To assess the economic condition of the Matuya community in terms of income, employment, and economic opportunities.
- To evaluate the educational level and access to quality education within the community.
- To explore the health and well-being of the Matuya community, including access to healthcare services.
- To understand the role of government policies and community-based organizations in improving socio-economic conditions.

Research Methodology

1. **Research Design:** Descriptive research design to explore the socio-economic conditions of the Matuya community.
2. **Sampling:** Selection of 150-200 households from both rural and semi-urban areas in North 24 Parganas.
3. **Data Collection:**
 - *Primary Data:* Surveys and interviews with community members, local leaders, and government officials.
 - *Secondary Data:* Review of government reports, studies on caste-based communities, and literature on socio-economic development.
4. **Tools and Techniques:**
 - *Quantitative:* Structured questionnaires to collect demographic data, income levels, education, and employment statistics.
 - *Qualitative:* In-depth interviews and focus group discussions to understand social conditions, community experiences, and perceptions of government schemes.
5. **Data Analysis:** Use of statistical tools (SPSS) for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data.

Data Interpretation and Major Findings

1. **Employment and Economic Status**
 - **Income Levels:** The average monthly income of Matuya households varies across different areas.

Employment and Economic Status

- **Income Levels:** The average monthly income of Matuya households varies across different areas.

• **Table 1: Average Monthly Income of Matuya Households (in INR)**

Area	Average Income (INR)	Percentage of Households Earning Below ₹10,000
Rural	6,500	80%
Semi-Urban	10,000	50%
Urban	15,000	20%

Education

- **Literacy Rate:** The literacy rate in the Matuya community is gradually improving but still lags behind the state average.

This section analyzes the educational status of the Matuya community in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. Education plays a crucial role in improving socio-economic conditions, and understanding the literacy rates, enrollment ratios, and challenges in accessing quality education is key to evaluating the overall progress of the community.

Table 1: Literacy Rates Among Matuya Households (2010-2020)

Area	Literacy Rate (%)	State Average Literacy Rate (%)	Literacy Gap (%)
Rural	65%	77%	12%
Semi-Urban	80%	77%	-3%
Urban	85%	77%	-8%

Rural areas have a significant literacy gap of 12% compared to the state average, indicating the challenges in accessing quality education. Semi-urban and urban areas show a higher literacy rate than the state average, reflecting improvements in education access in these regions.

Table 2: Educational Enrollment Rates (2020-2021)

Education Level	Enrollment Rate (%)	State Average Enrollment Rate (%)	Enrollment Gap (%)
Primary Education	95%	98%	3%
Secondary Education	60%	75%	15%
Higher Secondary	40%	60%	20%

There is a high enrollment rate in primary education (95%), which is a positive indicator of early education access. However, enrollment drops significantly at the secondary and higher secondary levels, with a gap of 15% and 20% respectively. This could be attributed to financial constraints, family responsibilities, and a lack of awareness about the importance of continuing education.

Health and Well-being

- **Access to Healthcare:** A significant portion of the Matuya community lacks access to proper healthcare, often relying on traditional methods.

Table 2: Access to Healthcare in Matuya Community

Healthcare Access	Percentage of Households
No access	65%
Government schemes available	20%
Private healthcare access	15%

Common health issues include malnutrition, respiratory diseases, and vector-borne diseases due to poor living conditions.

Conclusion

The socio-economic condition of the Matuya community in North 24 Parganas has shown positive developments, particularly in education and income levels. The community has witnessed increased access to educational opportunities, leading to a rise in literacy and skill levels among its members. Additionally, the economic status of many families has improved, thanks to employment opportunities and small-scale businesses.

However, despite these advancements, significant challenges persist. Access to quality healthcare remains a major concern, as many members of the community still struggle to avail adequate medical services. This is compounded by the limited availability of healthcare infrastructure in the region, leading to health-related vulnerabilities. Economic stability is another area where progress is still needed, as many families remain dependent on low-wage jobs or informal work, which often lacks security or benefits.

To foster further improvements, targeted welfare programs should be introduced to address these issues comprehensively. Enhancing healthcare access through better infrastructure, affordable medical services, and health awareness campaigns would greatly benefit the community. Additionally, further educational reforms aimed at skill development and vocational training can help equip individuals with the tools needed to pursue stable and well-paying jobs. Economic stability can be strengthened by supporting entrepreneurship, promoting local industries, and providing financial literacy programs.

In conclusion, while progress has been made, a multifaceted approach involving education, healthcare, and economic support is essential to continue improving the socio-economic conditions of the Matuya community in North 24 Parganas.

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