

PATTERNS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EVIDENCE FROM A SURVEY IN DELHI

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Abstract

Education has a significant impact on human lives. It is a significant aspect of socialization and improving the future opportunity of work. It is argued that higher education has become accessible to all irrespective of any discrimination based on gender, caste, religion or other considerations. However, there exists a strong pattern of social exclusion in higher education. The objective of this paper is to discover the patterns of social exclusion in higher education, taking evidence from a survey in Delhi. A survey was conducted from a sample of 348 people in eight residential colonies in Delhi. The findings suggest that gender, caste, class and religion make a difference to educational attainment and leads to social exclusion in higher education. Females are more excluded than males; Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) are more excluded than General caste; Lower socioeconomic status (SES) are more excluded, and finally, Muslims are more excluded than Hindu and other religion. It is also found that the educational attainment of respondents is directly related to the amount of social capital they possess.

Keywords: *Education, Patterns, Social Exclusion, Survey, Delhi*

INTRODUCTION

Education has a significant impact on human lives. It is a significant aspect of the socialization of children and youth, and an essential tool for improving the future opportunity of work. In the changing global scenario, the importance of higher education in the creation of knowledge-based society assumes special significance. Education has expanded mysteriously during the last couple of decades. People from diverse background have access to it, yet it may be noted that education is accessible differently by a different section of people. Education has become one of the sources of the production and reproduction of inequality in our society. Despite the expansion of the education system and incorporation of various groups into the public education system, there exist strong patterns of social exclusion in education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The seemingly intractable inequality in educational and economical attainment of citizens of different racial/ ethnic and socioeconomic background is probably one of the thorny challenges with profound social implications (St. John, 2003). Some studies argue that gender differences in enrollment ratios at all levels of education have virtually disappeared (Roy et al., 1996). While other studies advocate that gender-based exclusion exists in education. As far as caste is concerned, Tharoor (1997) opined that the stigma of caste is disappearing more rapidly in Indian cities than that of race in the United States. Caste does not seem to pose a challenge for educational attainment. Ali & Khan (2008) in their study, find that Muslims lag in terms of 'mean years of schooling' as compared to other religion. According to Blau and Duncan (1967), father's education and occupational status explain the son's educational attainment. This means that socioeconomic status does influence the educational level of people. Variables such as the frequency of parent-child discussion and parental participation in school activities are commonly used to measure parental involvement (Singh et al., 1995; Steinberg et al., 1992). Parental involvement dramatically lessens the challenges of the respondent for educational attainment. Social exclusion in education is manifest by the influence that social status and significant others within one's social sphere have.

The social capital theory posits that people receive information, values, norms and aspirations through the

interpersonal relationships they have with their parents, peers and others (Coleman, 1988). Apart from parents, people's socialization via peer groups plays a critical role in the postsecondary educational preparation process (Tierney & Colyar, 2005). The interpersonal relations provides resources embedded in network developed by these interactions. Social capital reflects a potential set of resources inherent in the social ties that an individual holds and the advantages that may be created by the activation of particular links in a social network (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003). Social capital always exists "in the strength of social relations that make available to the person the resources of others" (Coleman, 1990). Parents, peers and acquaintances are the main components of the social network. In this study, parents, peers and acquaintance are included to examine their influence on the educational attainment on respondents.

Parental involvement is an essential component of social capital. Peer's support is another indicator of social capital that affects educational achievement. Parent's involvement in their children's education has a much stronger effect on the educational attainment of their children (Trusty & Harris, 1999). The growing significance of peers in the lives of people have been recognized and studied in both social and academic development (Shaffer, 2000; Tierney & Colyar, 2005). Peer tutoring and reciprocal peer-teaching have been relatively consistent as a positive indicator of the student's academic success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The primary role of education in society is the contribution it makes to the reproduction of the relationship of power and privilege between social classes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). These aspects which pattern social exclusion in higher education have been verified in this study using a survey data from Delhi.

DATA AND METHODS

This paper is based on a sample survey of 348 people in the age group 18 to 29 years from eight residential colonies in Delhi. They were asked questions on various socio-economic variables. Variables used in this study are gender, caste, religion, socioeconomic status, parental involvement, support from peers and support from acquaintances. Tables and bar graphs have been drawn to understand the effect of various factors on the educational level of respondents.

It is important to note that socioeconomic status is derived from three components – 'father's educational level', 'father's occupation' and 'per-capita household income'.

A series of four items are used here to measure the extent of parental involvement. These four items are: How often do you discuss the choice of courses with your parent(s)? How often do you discuss grades/ marks with your parent(s)? How often do you discuss job prospects with your parent(s)? How often do you discuss troubling things in your life with your parent(s)? The five options for answering these items are coded as (1) almost never, (2) seldom, (3) sometimes, (4) often and (5) almost always. The composite score on these four items gives the extent of parental involvement. Larger the measure more the extent of parental involvement.

PATTERNS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN EDUCATION

The key variables that pattern social exclusion in education are described above. These variables have been taken below one by one.

Gender

Figure 1 shows the clustered bar diagram to understand social exclusion in educational attainment according to gender. The figure shows that higher proportions of the female have education up to primary and secondary education as compared to male. However, as far as higher education is concerned, 45.5 percent of male have university education as compared to 37.8 percent of female. So females are restricted to primary and secondary education and excluded from higher education.

Caste

Figure 2 represents the clustered bar diagram to reveal the pattern of caste-based exclusion from higher education. About 48 percent of respondents among General caste are having higher education. This figure is 41.4 percent for OBCs and only 24.6 percent among STs. This reaffirms caste-based social exclusion in higher education.

Figure 1: Clustered Bar Diagram Showing, Educational Level of Respondents According to Gender

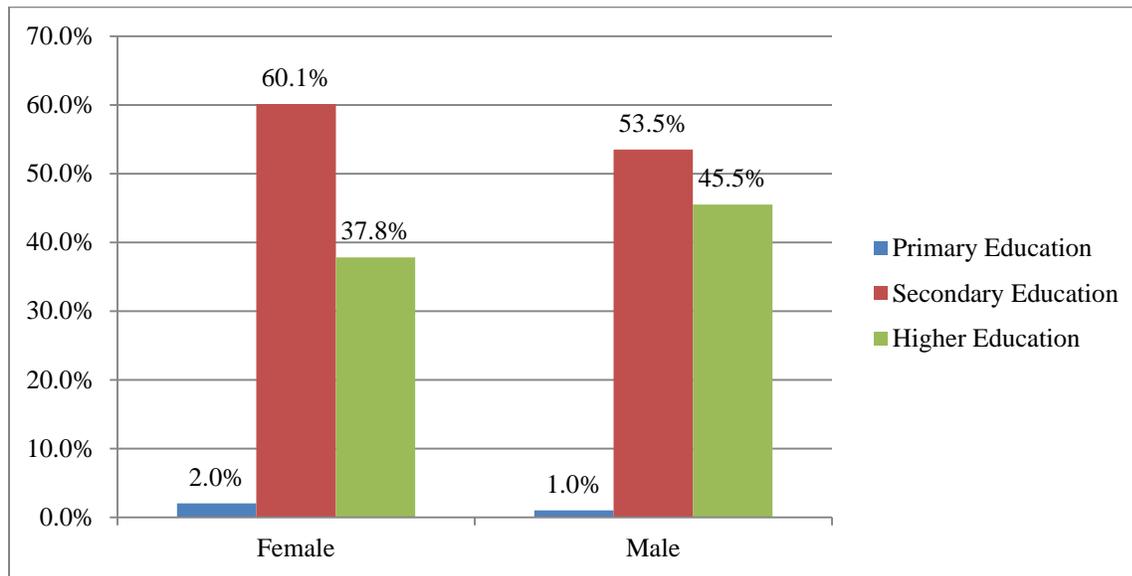


Figure 2: Clustered Bar Diagram Showing, Educational Level of Respondents According to Caste

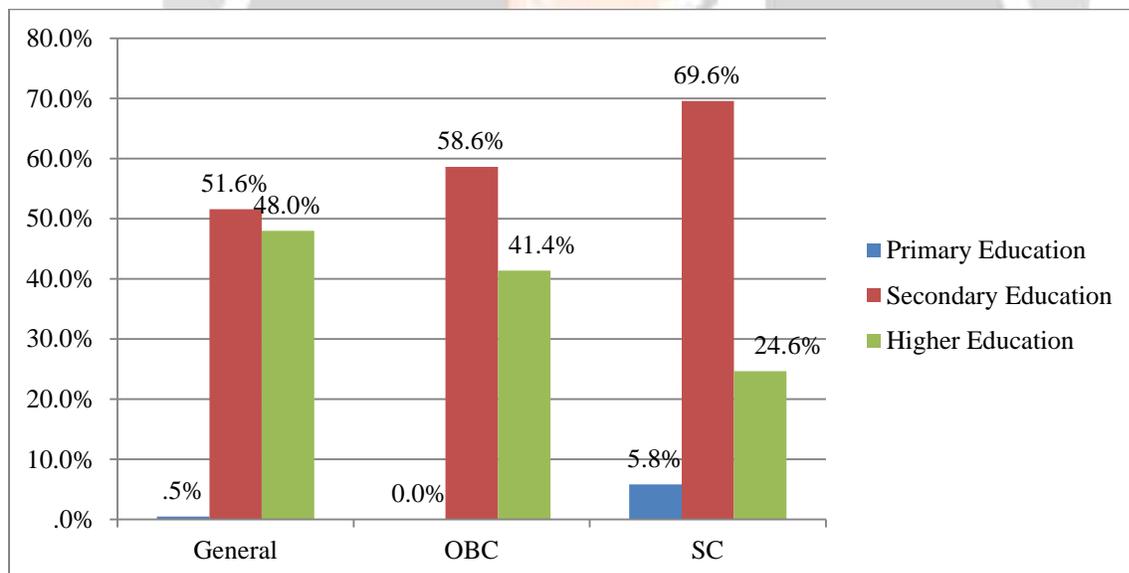


Figure 2 clearly shows that there is a big difference between general and scheduled caste as far as higher education is concerned.

Religion

Several studies confirm the exclusion of Muslims from higher education. This is true for Muslim respondents in Delhi as well. As compared to Hindu (42.7 percent) and other religion (52 percent), only about 31.4 percent Muslims have higher education. This explains the exclusion of Muslims from higher education. This is shown in Figure 3. It is important to note that the category 'other' includes such religion as Sikh, Jain and Christian.

Figure 3: Clustered Bar Diagram Showing, Educational Level of Respondents According to Religion

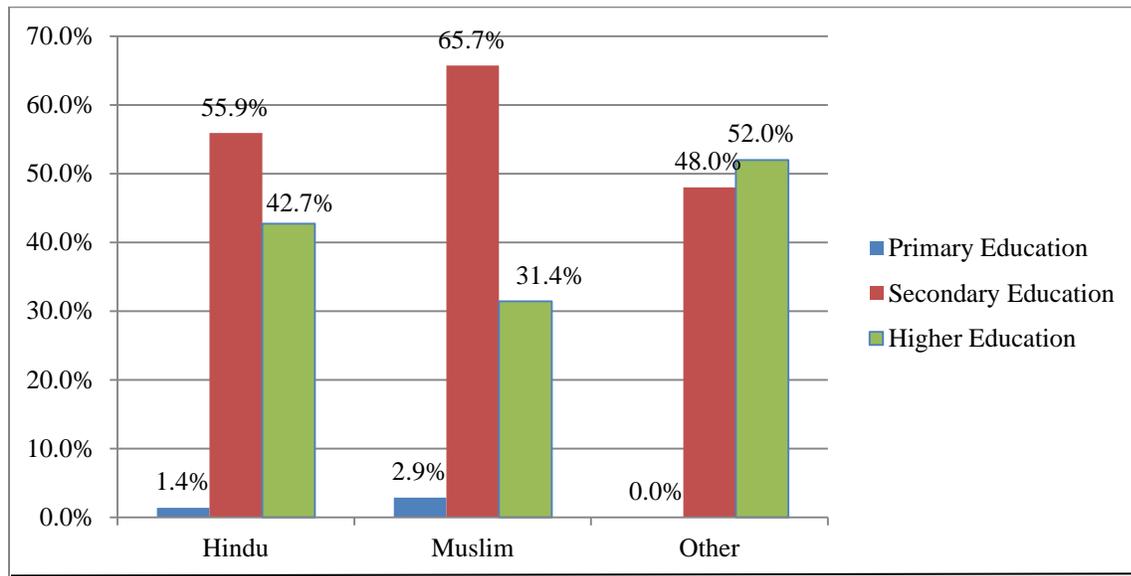
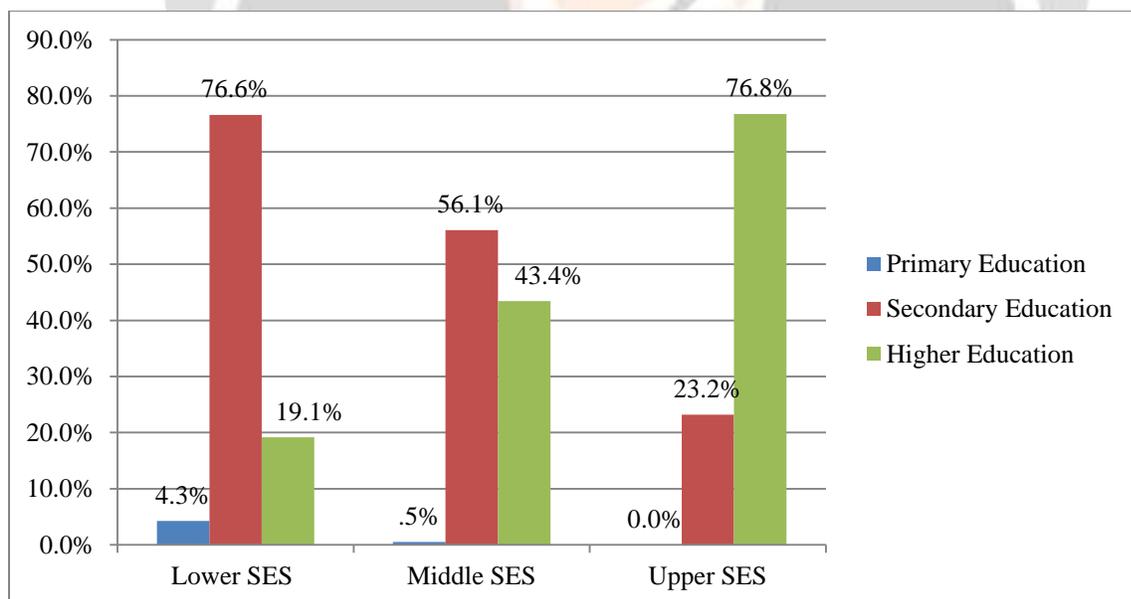


Figure 4: Bar Diagram Showing Educational Level of Respondents According to SES



Socioeconomic Status

Figure 4 further shows the educational level of respondents according to socioeconomic status. The figure clearly shows that there is a significant difference between the three socioeconomic status of respondents. Socioeconomic status is achieved attribute which hold more considerable influence in determining the educational attainment today. About 76.8 percent of respondents from upper SES have higher education. This figure is 43.4 percent for middle SES and 19.1 percent for lower SES. As compared to caste and religion, lower SES, or in other words, poverty, is a big challenge for educational attainment resulting in their social exclusion from higher education.

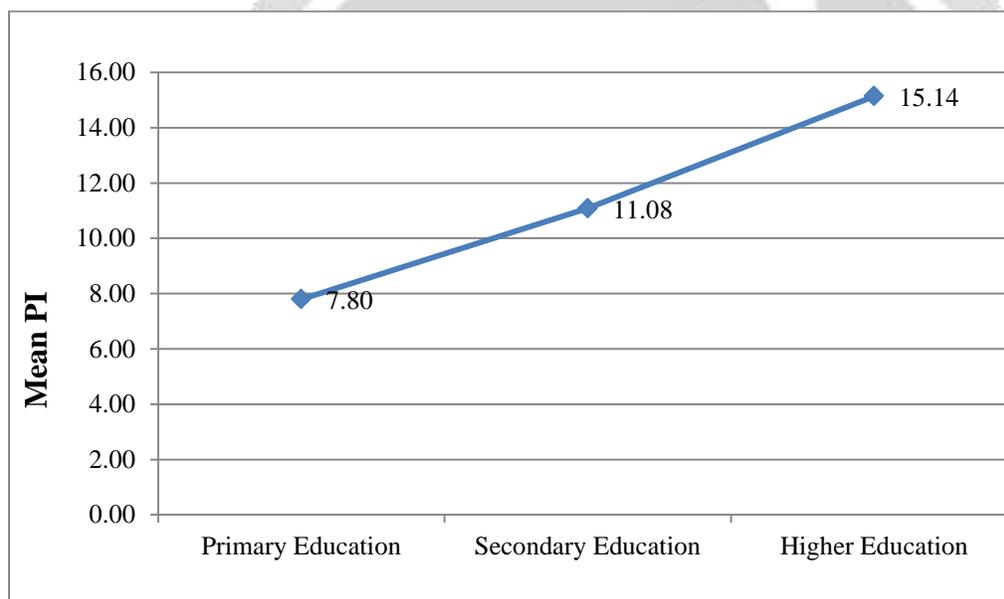
EFFECT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital refers to resources in the form of social relations that one has in society. The three critical indicators of social capital are parental involvement, support from peers and support from acquaintances. The descriptive data for four items that determine parental involvement is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Data for Parental Involvement (1 = Almost Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often and 5= Almost Always)

	M	SD
Parental Involvement		
How often discuss courses of choice?	3.24	1.163
How often discuss grades/ marks?	3.06	0.936
How often discuss job prospects?	3.65	0.910
How often discuss troubling things?	2.80	0.960
Total	12.75	3.79

Figure 5: Line Graph Showing Parental Involvement for Different Level of Education



The composite score of all four questions gives the overall extent of parental involvement. More the composite score, more the parental involvement. The parental involvement varies from 5 to 20 with mean = 12.75 and standard deviation = 3.79. Figure 5 describes the relationship between parental involvement and level of education. Mean parental involvement for those who are only primary educated is 7.8. However, this figure is 11.08 for those having secondary education and 15.14 for those who are having higher education. These figures suggest that parental involvement is an essential determinant of social exclusion in education.

Further, it is essential to note that parental involvement, along with peer's support and acquaintance's support constitutes the social capital that individual has. Effect of peer's and acquaintance's support is discussed below. Figure 6 shows that if peers support to a very great extent, then about 84.6 percent of them achieve higher education. Low level of social support from peers has no effect on educational attainment. Similarly, Figure 7 indicates that support from acquaintances also plays a crucial role in achieving higher education. If support from acquaintances is to a very less extent, then only 3.5 percent acquire higher education. However, if the support is to a very great extent, then about 80 percent of them achieve higher education. Overall social capital is also an important aspect that determines social exclusion in higher education.

Figure 6: Clustered Bar Diagram Showing Educational Level of Respondents According to the extent of Support from Peers/ Friends

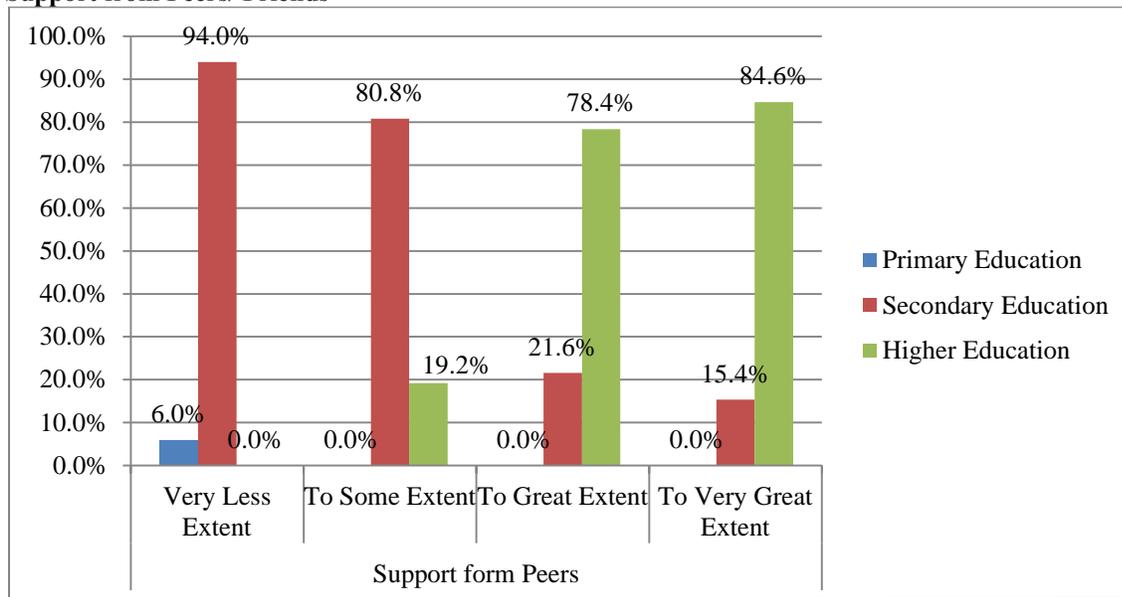
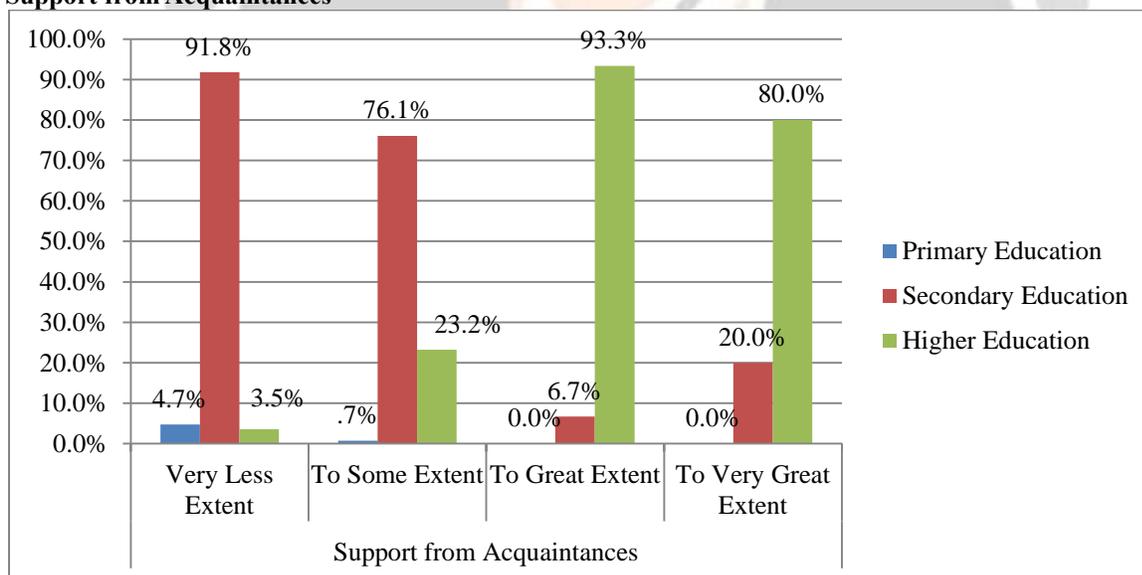


Figure 7: Clustered Bar Diagram Showing, Educational Level of Respondents According to the extent of Support from Acquaintances



CONCLUSION

Gender, caste, class and religion make a difference to educational attainment leads to social exclusion in higher education. The study confirms that females are more excluded than males; SCs and OBCs are more excluded than General caste, Lower SES are more excluded from upper and middle SES, and finally, Muslims are more excluded from higher education than Hindu and other religion. Further, the study reaffirms that social capital has a vital role in educational achievement. Three variables that are considered here that determine social capital of respondents are – parental involvement, peer's support and support from an acquaintance. It is found that the educational attainment of respondents is directly related to the amount of social capital they possess.

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