

Some Correlates of Literacy and Educational Attainment Among Children in Rural Areas of Uttar Pradesh

1. Introduction

THE literacy rate in rural India is very low; it is glaringly so in Uttar Pradesh where only 22 per cent population is literate. This percentage for male in 1971 was 31.5 and for female is 10.6. This paper attempts to study the pattern of educational attainment among children and to identify correlates of their literacy and educational attainment in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh. More specifically the objectives of this paper are:

- (i) To study the educational profile of children with different socio-demographic background;
- (ii) To study how far parity and sex of children are associated with their literacy and educational attainment;
- (iii) To study the association between parent's characteristics and the child's educational achievement; and
- (iv) To study the working status of children who do not go to school.

2. Data and Methodology

A scheme "Birth and Death Data Collection through Auxiliary Nurse Midwives" at all the 10 Sub-centres of Kadipur Primary Health Centres of Sultanpur district was introduced in August 1975 to study whether Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) could effectively be used to collect information related to vital

events in the villages where they were ported (headquarter village). A baseline survey was carried out by the Population Centre, India Population Project, Lucknow and basic information on several socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the households was collected. The analysis presented here is an outcome of this baseline data from 10 headquarter villages of Kadipur PHC.

The total number of households in the ten villages under study is 2405 of which 53 could not be studied for various reasons. The total population in the remaining 2352 households was 14,751, giving an average size as 6.3 persons per household. In all there 3,275 children of school-going age (5-14 years).

The first step was to assess how far these 10 Subcentre headquarter villages were representative of the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh or even of rural areas of Sultanpur. Table 1 compares various socio-demographic characteristics of the ten study villages with the rural areas of Sultanpur and U. P.

TABLE 1—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN THE STUDY AREA*, RURAL SULTANPUR AND THE RURAL U. P.

Characteristics	Percent Distribution of Population		
	Census 1971		Study Area
	U.P. (Rural')	Sultanpur (Rural)	
(a) Age			
0-14	41.9	40.7	42.8
15-49	44.9	44.8	41.3
50+	13.2	14.5	14.9
(b) Religion			
Hindu	83.9	87.4	94.7
Muslim	35.5	12.6	5.3
Others	0.7	—	—
(c) Literacy			
	21.7	17.2	24.8
(d) Marital Status			
Unmarried	—	37.7	39.9
Married	—	56.5	52.7
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	—	5.8	7.4
(e) Working Population			
	30.9	37.2	31.3
(f) Occupation for Working Population			
Cultivators	57.4	57.4	51.9
Agricultural labourers	20.0	32.2	28.9
Others	22.6	10.4	19.2

The study area consists of 10 headquarter subcentre villages.

It may be noticed that the characteristics of study population are quite similar to that of the rural Sultanpur or even that of **U.P.** except that it has a relatively higher proportion of Hindu population and a slightly higher literacy rate. This is probably because the literacy status among Hindus is slightly higher than other religions. It may, therefore, be assumed that the results obtained in this population are generally representative of the rural population of Uttar Pradesh.

3. Results

The results, for convenience, have been presented in six sections: The first section discusses the general educational level; the second, social and demographic characteristics of school-going children (ages 5-14); the third, literacy among children by their socio-demographic background; the fourth, differentials in education by sex and parity of children; the fifth, the association of parental characteristics with the educational status of their children; and the sixth, the distribution of work status of those who do not go to school.

Levels of Literacy and Trend Overtime. The definition of literacy in this paper is similar to the usual census definition where a literate person is the one who can read and write. The literacy rate among the recently born cohort (1940-60) is quite high (56 percent males and 21 percent females) compared to those born earlier (27 percent males and 5 percent females for those born before 1925). For the study on trend, the population has been divided into three different birth cohorts: (i) those born prior to 1925, (ii) those born between 1925-1940, and (iii) those born between 1940-1960. (Since the children born after 1960 may still join school sometimes in future, this group was not studied). It may be noticed (Table 2) that the literacy has considerably improved over time, specially among

TABLE 2—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION (15+) BY BIRTH COHORT AND EDUCATION LEVEL

<i>Birth Cohort</i>	<i>Education level (in percent)</i>					
	<i>Illiterate</i>		<i>Upto Primary</i>		<i>More than Primary</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>
born prior to 1925	73.0	95.0	22.8	4.2	4.2	0.8
born between 1925-1940	68.1	91.8	22.1	6.9	9.8	1.3
born between 1940-1960	43.5	78.6	21.4	12.0	35.1	9.4
Total	56.0	84.9	21.8	9.3	22.2	5.8

the males. Though, a little less than half (44 per cent of the males) are still illiterate in the 1940-60 cohort, this percentage is as high as 73 per cent in the cohort born prior to 1925. For females, the figure for the recent birth cohort is 79 per cent but has declined from 95 percent born prior to 1925.

The last row of the table gives a cross-sectional educational status of a rural community in Uttar Pradesh, showing that 56 percent of the male population is illiterate, 22 per cent below primary education and another 22 percent more than primary education. Similarly for females such percentages are 85, 9 and 6, respectively.

Social and Demographic Characteristics of Children (aged 5-14 years). The social and demographic profile of children aged 5-14 years is given in Table 3. This table indicates a cross-sectional distribution of children in different categories. The distribution of children in parities one through five is 36.7, 30.4, **19.1**, 9.8 and 4.0, respectively. About six per cent of children are married; about 38 per cent are literate though only 32 per cent are currently in school.

Literacy among Child Population by their Socio-demographic Background. Table 4 presents socio-economic-demographic profile of children by their educational attainments and suggests its correlates. It may be noticed that the education of a child is considerably affected by the social and economic background of the child. Thirty five percent of children among Hindus go to school compared to the corresponding 22 percent among the Muslims. Among the Hindus, children belonging to Middle Caste groups have the maximum educational attainment (59 per cent), followed by upper castes (27.0 per cent) and then scheduled castes (14 per cent). Relatively lower literacy among the upper castes (compared to middle castes) in rural areas may be due to the fact that they tend to have larger land holdings and therefore either do not care to send their children to school or absorb them on their land when they attain the right age. They do not see any need for sending their children to school. The variation in children's educational opportunity by their social background has also been reported by Coleman (1966) and Nam (1971).

It would be seen from the data that the first child is generally not sent to the school perhaps the first born helps her/his parents either in agriculture or at home. If the figures in section (d) of Table 4 are taken as representing longitudinal data, it may be noticed that few children, only 29 per cent, go to school (most of them stay at home or work in agriculture), larger percentage are sent to school when second, third or fourth children are born and become of school going age. In other words, first few children are more likely to be kept at

TABLE 3—SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF CHILDREN (AGED
5-14 YEARS)

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Percentage (N = 3275)</i>
(a) Age group	
5-9	56.8
10-14	43.2
(b) Sex	
Male	56.3
Female	43.7
(c) Marital Status	
Married	57
Unmarried	94.3
(d) Education	
Illiterate	62.1
Illiterate below	
Primary Level	25.8
Primary and J. H. S.	11.4
High School and more	0.7
(e) Religion	
Hindu	94.3
Muslim	5.7
(f) Type of Family	
Joint	55.1
Nuclear	44.9
(g) Parity	
First	36.7
Second	30.4
Third	19.1
Fourth	9.8
Fifth	4.0
(h) Occupational Status	
Working	11.6
Student	32.3
Non-working	56.1
(i) Type of Occupation	
(for those working)	
Cultivation	43.3
Agricultural Labour	35.8
Business	8.9
Service	4.3
Labour	7.7

home to help the family; thereafter more and more are sent for education. This finding is confirmed from sections (f) and (g) of Table 4.

TABLE 4-LITERACY PROFILE AMONG THE CHILDREN (5-15 YEARS) BY THEIR SOCIAL ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

<i>Profile of Children</i>	<i>Percentage of literate children (N = 3275)</i>
(a) Sex	
Male	46.9
Female	19.1
(b) Religion	
Hindu	35.2
Muslim	21.5
(c) Caste	
Upper	27.0
Middle	58.9
Scheduled	13.9
(d) No. of Children (aged 5-14) to a Couple	
1	28.5
2	44.5
3	58.5
4+	65.4
(e) Type of Family	
Joint	51.9
Nuclear	36.6
(f) Parity	
First	2.4
Second	24.1
Third	16.1
Fourth or more	17.2
(g) Age at Effective Marriage (Males)	
10	17.1
10-12	41.2
13-14	46.2

Differentials in Education of Children by Parity and Sex. The educational attainment of children (ages 5-14) by parity and sex was studied in order to assess whether parity of the child (separately for male and female) is correlated with the educational status. Table 5 gives this distribution. It may be noticed that the oldest male child is more likely to be illiterate compared to male children of higher parity. While 56 percent of male children of parity first are illiterate, 46 percent of parity fourth and above belong to this category. This confirms our earlier finding that the oldest child is more likely to stay at home and help the parents. Among females, the relationship is inverse than that for the males; that is, earlier parity female children are more likely to go to school.

TABLE 5-PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN 5-14 BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND PARITY

Educational* Attainment	Parity							
	1		2		3		4+	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
I	56.3	73.1	54.3	75.8	50.3	82.6	45.6	82.8
II	34.8	25.3	37.3	23.1	46.5	16.9	52.2	15.6
III	8.9	2.6	8.4	1.1	3.3	0.5	2.2	1.6
Total	571	454	370	376	316	218	184	180

*I: Illiterate; II: Upto Primary; III: More than Primary.

Another observation which emerges from the table is that the difference between the male and female children who go to school keeps on increasing with parity. That is higher the parity, higher the differential between male and female children who go to school.

Association between Parental Characteristics and Educational Attainment of Children (5-14)

EDUCATION OF FATHER. The mothers in rural areas were usually illiterate and work as house-wives; therefore father's educational level and his occupational status were considered to be important factors associated with children's educational attainment. Table 6 presents the percentage distribution of children of different family size by literacy status classified by educational attainment of father. The table gives distribution of children among all families as well as the size of family :

TABLE 6—PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN LITERATE BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF FATHER AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FAMILY

No. of Children in family	Education of father			
	Illiterate	Upto Primary	Upto High School	Intermediate or more
1	15.4	43.1	50.7	44.0
2	11.9	50.0	67.0	65.2
3	22.3	50.0	66.7	70.7
4+	29.7	51.5	55.7	70.0
Total	20.6	49.9	57.2	57.2

It is clear that the literacy status of children is positively associated with the literacy status of father—only 21 per cent children of illiterate fathers go to school compared to more than 50 per cent for fathers who are literate or have attained higher educational levels. According to Nam *et al.* (1965), better educated parents are more likely to place a high value on education and to want their children to start school as early as possible.

Another interesting observation emerges when the literacy status of children is associated with that of their father among families with different number of children. It would be seen that in a family of one child, there is less interest in sending the child to school, probably because he/she can help the parents. When more than one child is born there is more inclination to send them to school. This phenomenon is more prominent among families of illiterate parents and those where parents are educated upto intermediate or more.

OCCUPATION OF FATHER. The occupation of father, though to some extent associated with his educational level, is generally associated with the child's literacy status. This section therefore attempts to study whether the nature of job of the father has any impact on the schooling and educational attainment of the child.

It may be noticed that the fathers working as agricultural labourers have the largest percentage of children illiterate and the fathers engaged in service have the lowest (almost one-half that of the agricultural labourers). Also, those who go to school (among Agricultural labourers) in their early ages, have to discontinue their schooling to do some job for improving the economic status of the family. The fact is clear from Table 7 since only 3 per cent of the

TABLE 7—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN (5-14) IN DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION BY OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF FATHER

Education of Child (5-14)	Occupation of Father				
	Cultivation	Agri. labour	Business	Service	Labour
Illiterate	52.6	84.7	54.3	42.9	63.2
Upto Primary	35.5	12.5	38.7	45.3	28.1
More than Primary	11.9	2.8	7.0	11.8	8.8

children continued their education beyond the Primary level compared to about 12 per cent of the cultivators group and the service group.

Working Status of Children who do not go to School. It is interesting to know what do the children do if they do not go to school. Their working status depends on the caste group to which a child belongs. Table 8 gives the distri-

TABLE 8—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE CHILDREN OF SCHOOL-GOING AGE (5-14) WHO DO NOT GO TO SCHOOL BY THEIR WORK STATUS AND CASTE GROUP

	Upper	Middle	Scheduled	Muslims	Total
Own Agriculture	5.3	13.4	5.5	3.7	8.4
Labour	1.4	3.8	19.6	2.2	8.5
Business	1.0	0.9	0.8	19.1	2.3
Service	0.6	1.0	0.5	1.5	0.8
Non Worker	91.6	80.9	73.6	73.5	80.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of Children	358	702	602	136	1798

bution of children by their work status. It may be noticed that most of them do not work, or perceived as not working by elders in the family and thus reported as "non workers". This percentage varies from 74 percent for Scheduled Castes and Muslims to 92% for the upper caste Hindus. The highest percentage among Upper caste Hindus may reflect the fact that the elders do not like

to admit that their children (in young ages) are working. In Middle caste Hindu families, the second largest percentage (after non worker category) is reported to be engaged in their own agriculture. In the Scheduled Castes, they work as labourers and among Muslims they are engaged in business.

4. Summary and Conclusions

This paper has presented a profile of educational level of children in the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh. It has been seen that literacy rate among males is more than two times that of females. More Hindus are literate than Muslims and male children of earlier parities are less likely to be sent to school than those of higher parities. In the case of females, the tendency is different, i.e. more female children of earlier parities go to school compared to the later parities.

The literacy status of children is positively associated with their father's education. The occupation of father is also associated with the educational attainment of the children; the fathers working as agricultural labourers have the largest percentage of children illiterate and the fathers engaged in service, the lowest.

References

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