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## Parental Support as Determinant of Social Capital and Education of Tribal Students in Tea Garden in North Bengal

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Dr. Aarti Yadav\*\*

### Abstract

*This paper investigates the role of parental support as a determinant of social capital in the education of tribal students from the Mal Block of Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal. This is exploratory research in which the researcher has tried to explore the experiences of the teachers about the tribal parental support in the education of their children. The researcher used a qualitative design to conduct this study with teachers from Mal Block. Many teachers were approached for this study. However, only 13 teachers agreed to take part and share their knowledge of the education of tribal students from the tea garden who attend their school. The data was gathered by the researcher using an interview technique. This study's framework is based on Coleman's concept of family social capital. The interview technique was used to collect the data. The study's findings suggest that the educational relationship between parents and students should be improved.*

**Key-words:** Parental Support, Social Capital and Education, Tribal Students, Tea Garden in North Bengal

### Background

According to the Indian constitution, education is a fundamental right of every child, and therefore, every Indian child must receive an education. Our Indian government is doing everything possible to ensure that every child receives an education. India has made rapid progress in the field of education, but one segment of society, tribals, lags far behind the general population of the country. According to the 2011 census, India's tribal population accounts for 8.6 per cent of the total population. India is a forward-thinking country that has advanced in every field. Since independence, the Indian government has passed numerous educational policies, ranging from the University Commission in 1948 to the present national educational policies in 2020, to further the development of education in the country. There were special provisions in each policy to develop tribal education in India. The Indian government established the tribal ministry of affairs to oversee the overall development of tribal in the country. The government runs several schemes for tribal educational welfare in each state of the country. However, tribal continue to lag behind in the field of education. According to the 2011 census, the total population literacy rate was 72.99 per cent, and the country's tribal literacy rate was 58.96 per cent. The Indian government and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are working in the field of education to provide education to tribal, but there is still much more to be done. Even though the government provides various incentives such as scholarships, clothing, and books, tribal children are unable to use government facilities to educate their children.

The current study was conducted among Mal Block teachers who work with tribal children from tea garden colonies in the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. The current paper investigates the role of parental support as a determinant of social capital and the education of tribal students at the tea garden.

### Social Capital

Many scholars have provided various definitions of social capital. According to Hanifan (2016) social capital is "that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for the most in the daily lives of a people, namely, goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy, and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who form a social unit, the rural community, whose logical centre is the school." Coleman (1988), "social capital is defined by its function." It is a collection of different entities rather than a single entity. They all have two things in common: they all consist of some aspects of social structures, and they all facilitate certain actions of actors—whether individuals or corporations—within the structure. Social capital, like other forms of capital, is productive, allowing for the accomplishment of goals that would not be possible without it. Coleman (1988) defines social capital as "the set of resources that inhere in family relations and community social organisation and that are useful for a child or young person's cognitive or social development." According to Bourdieu (2018) "social capital is the aggregate of actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or, in other words, membership in a group that provides each of its members with the backing of collectively owned capital, a credential that entitles them to credit, in various senses of the word." Social capital has been broadly defined as "social networks, the reciprocities that emerge from them, and the value of these for achieving mutual goals." (Vorhaus, 2014)

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### Parental support and Education

Coleman (1988) discovered that parental support had a positive influence on students in his study. He discovered that parents who went to church and had good relationships with their children had higher educational achievement and lower dropout rates. Fuller (2014b) discovered that, despite the fact that the majority of the parents were uneducated, they encouraged their daughters to pursue education, which was the most motivating factor for them to continue their education. The parents' interest was a major motivator for the daughters to pursue higher education. Kirk et al. (2011) discovered that parental expectations had a positive effect on children's education and aspirations. In their research, Abhisek & Soumendu (2014) discovered that most tribal regions were educationally backward, and educational institutions lacked adequate infrastructure and facilities. There were high dropout rates, and most parents did not want to send their children to school because of the distance. Iyengar (2012) conducted a case study to investigate the relationship between social capital and education among tribal people in Madhya Pradesh's Jhabua district. Except for two villages, he discovered in her research that there was a missing link between social capital and education in the majority of the villages. Only two villages out of fourteen demonstrated some evidence of a link between social capital and education. There was some kind of informal network among the villagers, and the elders of the villages made sure that every child in the village went to school. The review of the literature revealed that no work had been done on parental support and tribal education. Kujur (2020) found in his study that the reservation policies in education and employment had limited impact on the tribal of tea garden and still the large section of a tribal community largely depends on the tea garden for livelihood. Sarkar (2017) discovered that due to illiteracy and lack of awareness the tribal could not take the advantage of the government facilities and a high dropout rate is also found among the tribes in the tea garden. Basumata (2018) discovered that most of the parents are illiterate and therefore the parents cannot guide their children for education. There is a high dropout rate of girls because the parents engaged them in household work. Datta (2021) found in the study that the majority of the percentage of tribal from tea gardens do not have proper knowledge of developmental schemes.

### Research questions

What is the role of parental support as a determinant of social capital in the education of tribal children?

### Methods

This study was conducted using the qualitative research method. The researcher approached the school teachers of Mal Block working in the schools where the children of tribal workers are enrolled. Finally, 13 teachers consented in the study. The researcher followed the essential research ethics of data collection. The researcher informed the teachers about the study's purpose and obtained their written consent. The researcher also kept their identity private, and they had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher respected their right to privacy and dignity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers to collect data. There was no form of incentive provided to the participant. The participants gave their permission for the audio recording of the interview. As a result, all interviews were audio-recorded using a laptop.

### Analysis

The interview transcripts were translated from Hindi to English. Thematic analysis was conducted and the analysis produced the coding categories. Dedoose software was used to help with the coding.

### Finding of the study

Following the analysis of the interviews in this study, four themes emerged. These were parental support, government support, tea managers, and tribal parents' difficulties.

### Parental Support in Education

The majority of the teachers shared their observations that, in the tea garden, very few parents were able to support their children's education. The conscious and educated parents inquired about their children's education at the school by going to the school from time to time. The tribal parents also try to educate their children, and many of them succeed. "I have seen even tribal children compete with general children in studied due to family support," one of the teachers said.

Another teacher shared that the tribal parents' desire to educate their children helps their children stay motivated in school. In their opinion, the educational status of Bagan officials parent inspire them to educate their children. Teachers shared their observations that only educated parents prioritise their children's education. They asked teachers about their children's progress on a regular basis, but very few parents were concerned about their children's education. The majority of parents generally provide money for their children's schooling. The parents also sent their children to school, but the children misappropriated the tuition money.

### Government support

The teacher informed that the tribal children get lots of incentives from the government for educational development. The government provided scholarships, bicycles, mid-day meals, free-books. Nevertheless, tribal parents are not conscious enough to educate their children due to the lack of educational awareness. They sent their children to schools with no future goals. So, many tribal students cannot pursue for higher education and drop out after schooling.

**Tea managers**

The teachers shared their experience that except for providing a school bus or a truck for school transportation, the tea estate managers did nothing to further the education of their labourers' children. Similarly, very few tea owners provided transportation for children's education. However, this was insufficient for the children. The bus becomes extremely crowded, and the children face numerous difficulties. According to one of the teachers, "the tea managers also do not pay attention to the education of their workers' tribal children." For commuting to school, the tea garden owners provide only one vehicle from one tea garden. Because of the tea garden's difficult situation, the children are unable to study. The school bus is still parked near the factory. Children travel long distances to catch the bus. The children must arrive on time for the bus. Because school begins at 9.30 a.m., the children must get up early to catch the bus. The children begin at 5:00 a.m. They, too, do not receive a proper breakfast. Small children are also unable to attend school."

**Tribal Parents' Difficulties**

Due to a variety of factors, tribal parents were unable to provide for their children's education in the same way that non-tribal parents do. The tribal parents are unconcerned about the value of education. The teachers reported a number of issues that hampered tribal children's education. Tea garden work has overburdened the tribal people. They are bets that are placed on a daily basis. Due to the exhaustion of all-day work, the parents were unable to support their children's education. "The tribal parents work in the tea garden; therefore, they do not have time to look after the children's education," one of the teachers reported. They have their own set of circumstances. At 7:30 a.m., tribal parents leave for work. They finish their work at 4 p.m. and arrive."

Most parents are uneducated, and many are only non-matriculants, so they are unaware of the value of education for their children. "The guardian's support is very limited," one of the teachers stated. The only job of a guardian is to send their children to school. Children who are sincere go to school. Insincere children cannot continue their education, whereas sincere children can." Another teacher stated, "Teachers frequently visit the tea garden." According to my observations, only 10% of all families prioritise education. Even 90% of families are unaware of their children's grade level.

The education of tribal children is entirely dependent on the schoolteachers. Parents' only responsibility is to send their children to school. They did not follow up on their children's education. Parents believe that teachers will look after their children's education. According to one teacher, the guardian leaves their children unsupervised. The school has sent information to the parents numerous times, but they have yet to appear. They believe that education is solely the responsibility of the school."

The majority of the tribal parents in the tea garden were habitual alcoholics. As a result, they were unable to provide for their family. The parents are paid only the bare minimum of 200 rupees per day. Wages were also squandered. One teacher recounted an incident in her class, and the children are also required to work part-time in the tea garden. On one occasion, a child was sleeping in class. I became very enraged. I reprimanded him. What did you do all night? You worked all night, or what? Yes, ma'am, the boy replied, I was working all night in the factory to support my family. What about your father, I wondered? He stated that my father drinks whatever he earns. So I have to look after the family.

The tribal parents are impoverished. They are similar to bonded labourers. Their livelihood has been at the mercy of the tea garden companies. They didn't get enough money from the tea garden. Their pay was barely 200 rupees. They couldn't feed their children if they didn't work for one day. According to one of the teachers. "The tea garden dwellers live miserable lives. As a result, they are preoccupied with improving their own lives; how can they improve the lives of their children? Because they aren't getting enough food either. Many children arrive at school on an empty stomach. They eat fast food, so their health suffers."

**Discussion**

According to the study's findings, tribal parents' involvement in their children's education is extremely low. The teachers at the school are in charge of the children's education. How long will teachers look after the students? They can only look after children during the school day; the rest of the time, children are with their parents. As a result, parents should be concerned about their children's education. However, the tribal parents are unable to educate their children. It occurs because the majority of parents are illiterate or have only completed primary school. As a result, they are unaware of the significance of education. This finding supports the findings of Hazarika (2012) and Basumata (2018) who conducted their research in tea gardens. According to Basumata (2018), the majority of parents are illiterate, so they are unable to guide their children for education higher education.

Another significant finding is that the majority of tribal parents work as tea garden labourers. Economically, they are in a state of desperation. They are suffocating under the weight of their tea garden responsibilities. They receive daily wages of just a few hundred rupees. On 202 rupees, how are they going to provide for their family? They are unable to adequately feed their families as a result of their low wages. As a result, they are unable to afford the money necessary for their children's education. As a result, many tea garden workers migrate to larger cities in search of work, becoming victims of human trafficking in the process (Roy, 2017).

Additionally, the study discovered that tea garden companies make no effort to improve the economic and educational conditions of tribal people who live in tea gardens. The government is implementing a variety of programmes to benefit indigenous people. Tribal parents, on the other hand, are unable to participate in these programmes in order to improve their standard of living. Hazarika (2012) also discovered in his study that tea garden labourers are unaware of the various government schemes and facilities available to them due to the scarcity of educational opportunities available to them.

Another finding is that the majority of the parents drink alcohol on a regular basis. Their entire day's wage is spent drinking, and the wages are insufficient to support the family. As a result, many children are forced to work in tea garden factories to support their families. Roy (2017) also agrees that the majority of tea labourers, particularly the males, spent a portion of their earnings on alcohol. Thus, parents are unable to educate their children due to a lack of financial support on their part.

#### Conclusions and suggestions

According to the study's findings, tribal parents should be educated on the importance of education and about various programmes for the educational development of tribal children. If tribal parents are empowered educationally and economically, their children will be educated as well. NEP (2020) has provided criteria for equitable and inclusive education, i.e. learning for all. The policy also recognises that the "current educational system is irrelevant and foreign to their lives, both culturally and academically." As a result, policymakers should encourage more research and innovative programmes for tribal cultural and educational development, particularly for those living in tea gardens. This study was conducted solely to better understand parent-student relationships with a focus on education. Future research on the role of the parent-teacher relationship in education could be conducted on larger sample. Another study could be conducted to examine the impact of NEP 2020 on the educational development of tribal students. All attempts should be made to expand adult education among tea garden tribal parents. The government should pay special attention to the education of tea garden labourers. Preventing the sale of alcoholic beverages within and around tea garden areas should be a priority. The school should hold parent-teacher conferences on a regular basis. The educated residents of tea garden areas should be encouraged and assisted in obtaining teacher training and employment in tea garden area schools. The government should incorporate elements of tribal culture into the curricula of teacher education colleges located in tribally dominated areas.

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