Educational Issues of Children of the Tiwa Community of Assam A Statistical Interpretation

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Abstract

Tiwa community is one of the prominent tribes and a major ethnic group of Assam. Independent India has been paying due attention to the problems of the Scheduled Tribes and attempts are being made to deal effectively with their problems. In spite of all kinds of steps taken by the government for providing educational facilities, the Tiwa community is far below national literacy average as far as education is concerned. Our objective is to study the causes of the problems faced by the students of the Tiwa community in terms of likings, facilities, enrollment and retention. More specifically, an attempt has been made to identify causes of students' disliking for going to school, which in turn may be useful for reducing students' drop-outs. The study was undertaken in two districts of Assam namely Morigaon and Nagaon, where the density of population of the Tiwas is the highest. Altogether, eight villages were considered wherefrom 148 students were interviewed during data collection. Some bivariate analyses were done for a few characteristics, whereas multivariate analysis has been done using logistic regression analysis with liking for going to school by the students as the dependent variable. The analysis indicates that characteristics like gender, mid-day meal, cleanliness of school, reward by teacher and students' liking of the teachers have significant effect on the liking of students for going to school, whereas, attributes like education of parents, mode of transportation, play material and toilets in school do not appear to have any significant effect.

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Introduction

The Tiwas are one of the prominent Scheduled Tribes and a major ethnic group of Assam. They have enlisted themselves as a plain Scheduled Tribe but a section of them resides in the hilly areas also.The Tiwas have a population of 1,37,388 in the State of Assam (Census of 1991), which comprises both Hill Tiwas and the plain Tiwas. The plain Tiwas although, in due course of time assimilated with the Assamese society, culture and religions in their day-to-day life, a section of the Tiwas still follow the old traditions. They have their own dialect, dress, festival and beliefs.

However, like most of the backward classes of our country, Tiwa people are also suffering from many problems. Independent India has been paying due attention to the problems of the Scheduled Tribes and attempts are being made to deal effectively with those problems. Nevertheless, the Tiwa people are far away from receiving all the benefits given by the government. And at present, the Tiwas allege that all the allocated money is not properly utilised by the government and corrupt officials. So, no significant development has been promoted by the government and most of all there is a wide spread problem faced by the educational institutions. They do not have any recognition about their need from the government. Thus, Tiwa people are backward educationally, socially and are politically exploited. There are also other related problems which is a hurdle in the way of educational development among the Tiwas. Moreover, ignorance, superstitious beliefs, lack of scientific knowledge, geographical separation, etc. are the major problems of Tiwa people.

It is evident that there is dearth of research work and reports on the issues of Tiwa community and their problems regarding school education. Among those very few researchers, Sarma Thakur (1985) gave a vivid account of the Tiwa community. He brought out the life and culture of the Tiwas living in both plains and hills of Assam. Bordoloi et al (1987) also tried to portray a picture of the Tiwas in terms of socio-economic and education status.

Objectives

The Tiwa community suffers from low Socio Economic Status (SES). This low SES of the villagers is affecting the educational upliftment of the community. The education level of the parents is also very low to understand the benefits of being educated and therefore, their aspiration is very low. They are not even sure about what they want their children to do in life or how far they should study. The children too do not have high aspiration due to lack of support from the parents or exposure. While there was progress in improvement of literacy the phenomenon of school dropouts has remained a blot in the face of an otherwise good performance. Identification of factors influencing dropouts have not been widely discussed in the north-eastern part of the country (Choudhury, 2006). With this backdrop, the objectives in the present study are:

- to put light on general education scenario and the causes of the problems faced by the students of the Tiwa community in terms of facilities, enrolment and retention; and
- to identify causes of students' liking/disliking for going to school, identification of which should help reduce school drop-outs.

Data Base and Methodology

The Tiwa population is scattered in 17 districts of Assam, out of which Morigaon district is densely populated followed by Nagaon district. Nagaon district has a population of 20,38,570 of which 1,01,209 is Scheduled Tribe population and Morigaon district has an overall population of 7,76,256, of which the tribal population is 1,20,730. Therefore, these two districts were considered for the study. Each of these districts has a number of blocks and for convenience two blocks from each district were considered, i.e., four blocks in total. The blocks are namely Nagaon district (Kopili block and Raha block); Morigaon district (Mayang block and Bhurbandha development block). From each of these blocks again two villages were selected. They are Khaplangkuchi and Niz-Tarabari village from the Kapili block; Garoimari and Marjung gaon from Raha block of Nagaon district and Dabarghat and Kumarbari from Mayang block; Paschim merua gaon and Bar-Manipur village from Bhurbandha development block of Morigaon district.

Data Set

In the present study, interview, observation and questionnaires have been used for collecting the required data. Interview technique has been used widely in the study. As the Tiwa villagers are either illiterate or of low educational status, interview method was found to be the most suitable method to gather information about the problems of education. For conducting the study, two districts of Assam dominantly inhabited by the Tiwa Community were considered, viz. Morigaon and Nagaon districts. The sample of the work has been taken by random technique. Altogether, 148 students were selected for the study.

Analysis

The analysis of the results has been divided into two parts keeping in view the objectives of the study. First part is devoted to focus on general education scenario and the causes of the problems faced by the students of the Tiwa community in terms of facilities, enrolment and retention. The second part consists of identifying the causes of students' liking/ disliking for going to school. For this purpose Logistic Regression technique is adopted. The variable of interest is binary, whether the student likes going to school or not. The endeavour is to analyse the odds of a student likes going to school.

Part I: General educational scenario and the causes of problem faced by the students

Table 1
Frequency distribution of Socio-demographic factors

Variable	Fre-quency	% age
Gender		
Male	81	54.7
Female	67	45.3
Class of study		
LP	103	69.6
ME	30	20.3
Secondary	13	8.8
Higher Secondary	2	1.4
Education of Father		
Illiterate	31	20.9
Primary	90	60.8
Secondary	16	10.8
HS and above	11	7.4
Education of Mother		
Illiterate	74	50.0
Primary	58	39.2
Secondary	15	10.1
HS and above	1	0.7
Occupation of Father		
Agriculture	95	64.2
Business	6	4.1
Govt. service	11	7.4
Pvt. Service	5	3.4
Others	31	20.9
Occupation of Mother		
Housewife	36	24.3
Agricultural labourer	97	65.5
Labourer	6	4.1
Govt. service	5	3.4
Others	4	2.7
Type of House		
Kaccha	126	85.1
Pucca	22	14.9
Drinking water facility		
No	24	16.2
Yes	124	83.8
Toilet facility		
No	117	79.1
Yes	31	20.9
Domestic animals		
No	6	4.1
Yes	142	95.9

A few variables were studied to identify the Socio-demographic factors. It was seen that

(i) *Class of study:* 69.6 per cent of the other members in the family studied upto lower primary level, 20.3 per cent up to middle school, 8.8 per cent up to secondary level and rest 1.4 per cent up to higher secondary level.

(ii) *Education of father:* It was observed that 20.9 per cent of the fathers were illiterate, 60.8 per cent have studied till the primary level, 10.8 per cent up to secondary level and 7.4 per cent have studied till higher secondary or above.

(iii) *Education of mother:* 50.0 per cent of the mothers were illiterate, 39.2 per cent have studied till the primary level, 10.1 per cent up to secondary level and 0.7 per cent have studied till higher secondary or above.

(iv) *Occupation of father:* It was observed that 64.2 per cent of the father's occupation was agriculture, 4.1 per cent were in business, 7.4 per cent were in government service, 3.4 per cent in private service and the rest 20.9 per cent were engaged in sources of livelihood.

(v) *Occupation of mother:* It was observed that 24.3 per cent of the

mothers were housewives, 65.5 per cent were agricultural labourers, 4.1 per cent were engaged in other labour works, 3.4 per cent were in government service, and the rest 2.7 per cent were engaged in other occupations.

(vi) *Type of house:* 85.1 per cent of the respondents lived in *kaccha* house whereas the rest 14.9 per cent lived in *pucca* house.

(vii) *Drinking water facility:* 16.2 per cent responded that they did not have drinking water facility whereas 83.8 per cent responded that they did have drinking water facility.

(viii) *Toilet facility:* 79.1 per cent of the respondents replied that there was no toilet facility for them whereas 20.9 per cent had toilet facility.

(ix) *Domestic animals:* A minimal of 4.1 per cent responded that they did not have any domestic animal, but 95.9 per cent had domestic animals of their own.

Table 2
Frequency distribution of facilities in the schools

Variable	Fre-quency	%age
Blackboard in school		
No	20	13.5
Yes	128	86.5
Play ground in school		
No	90	60.8
Yes	58	39.2
Providing Textbook		
No	32	21.6
Yes	116	78.4

Providing note book		
No	146	98.6
Yes	2	1.4
Providing pen/pencil		
No	146	98.6
Yes	2	1.4
Knowledge of drop-outs		
No response	12	8.1
No	40	64.9
Yes	96	27.0
Reasons of drop-outs	117	79.1
No idea	10	6.8
Financial problems	21	14.2
Loss of interest in study		

Systematic analyses of the facilities available in the schools were done by administering an interview schedule among 148 students.

(i) *Black Board in school:* 13.5 per cent of the respondents (school students) said that they did not have blackboard in school or it was not usable. The rest 86.5 per cent did have blackboards at school.

(ii) *Play ground in school:* 60.8 per cent of the respondents said that there was no play ground in their school whereas 39.2 per cent said they had playgrounds.

(iii) *Textbook:* 21.6 per cent respondents did not possess any textbook while the rest 78.4 per cent had textbooks with them.

(iv) *Providing Note Book:* 98.6 per cent of the respondents replied that no Note Books were provided by the school but a very negligible section (1.4 per cent) replied that they were provided Note Books by the school.

(v) Providing Pen/Pencil: 98.6 per cent of the respondents said that no Pen/Pencil was provided by the school but 1.4 per cent replied that they were provided Pen/Pencil by the school.

(vi) Knowledge of drop-outs: 8.1 per cent of the respondents did not have any knowledge of drop out from their school while 64.9 per cent did not have any knowledge of drop-outs and 27 per cent said that they knew students who have dropped out.

*(vii) Reasons of drop-*outs: 79.1 per cent of the students did not know the reasons of drop-outs. 6.8 per cent replied that financial problems were the reason for drop-outs and 14.2 per cent said loss of interest in studies is the reason for drop-out.

Part II: Identification of the causes of students' liking/disliking for going to school

Following explanatory variables are considered for the logistic regression analysis:

(i) Gender of the respondents: The variable has been categorised as M representing 'male' and F representing 'female'.

(ii) Education of father: Code 1 represents illiterate, 2 represents primary education, code 3 is for secondary education and 4 for HS and above.

(iii) Education of mother: This variable has been coded similar to that of father of the respondents.

(iv) Mode of transport: The variable has been categorised as 1 for 'on foot' and 2 for 'others', which consists of those coming by 'cycle' and by 'public transport'.

(v) Cleanliness of school. Intention is to check if cleanliness of school motivates students to come to school. It has been coded 0 for 'no' and 1 for 'yes'.

(vi) Play materials in the school: We wished to check if availability of play materials in the school has any effect on students for going to school. It has also been coded 0 for 'no' and 1 for 'yes'.

(vii) Mid day meal. It was included in the study to check if mid day meal induces students to school.

(viii) Drinking water facility in school: The variable has been coded 0 for 'no' and 1 for 'yes'.

(ix) Toilet in school. It is particularly important for girl students, which is one of the significant factors responsible for girls' drop-outs as evident from earlier literature.

(x) Reward by the teachers: Aim is to check if reward by teachers in the school has any effect on the students.

(xi) Students' liking of the teachers: The variable has been coded 0 for 'no' and 1 for 'yes'. It is included in the study to know whether the variable has any effect on students.

(xii) Comfortable with the language in the school: Our objective was to examine whether students are comfortable in the language used

as medium of instruction in the class room.

Logistic Modelling

Result of logistic regression is placed in Table 3. The classification table provided evidence on adequacy of the model with correct prediction over 84 per cent (the cut off is taken at 0.79 following the procedure outlined by Crammer (1999)). The coefficient estimates, their standard errors, p-values for testing their significance and the change in odds corresponding to unit increase in the dependent variable is given in Table 3.

Table 3
Results of Logistic Regression

Independent Variables	Estimate of Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	p-value	Odds Ratio	95% C.I. for Odds Ratio	
					Lower	Upper
Gender Male Female ®	-2.530	.968	.019	.180	.112	.531
Education of Father			.625			
Illiterate	1.553	1.796	.387	4.725	.140	159.768
Primary	.919	1.601	.566	2.506	.109	57.785
Secondary HS and above®	2.470	2.101	.240	11.817	.192	726.150
Education of Mother			.793			
Illiterate	-22.234	40192.4	1.000	.000	.000	_
Primary	-21.604	40192.4	1.000	.000	.000	_
Secondary HS and above®	-21.055	40192.4	1.000	.000	.000	_
Mid Day Meal No Yes ®	-3.653	1.037	.000	.103	.113	.198
Cleanliness of school No Yes ®	-2.071	.766	.007	.126	.028	.566
Play Material in school No Yes ®	-.793	.811	.328	.452	.092	2.216
Students like teacher No Yes ®	-3.326	1.329	.012	.036	.003	.486
Mode of transport On foot Others ®	-17.252	28420.6	1.000	.000	.000	_
Toilet in School No Yes ®	-.983	.957	.304	.374	.057	2.440

Drinking water in School No Yes ®	2.779	1.816	.126	16.104	.459	56.45
Reward by teacher No Yes ®	-2.024	.830	.015	.132	.026	.672
Comfortable with the language in school No Yes ®	-1.618	1.136	.048	.739	.058	2.002

Note: ® stands for reference category

Discussions

The p-values in Table 3, reveal that gender is a significant (p-value being 0.019) factor for respondents' liking for going to school. The odds ratio of the same table shows that males are less interested (odds ratio being 0.180) in going to school as compared to their female counterparts. Another important factor for students' liking for going to school is the provision of mid day meal. Mid day meal is provided to the students by the Government to attract them to school. Mid day meal scheme of Government has been quite successful throughout the state. Our data also support the Government claim. The variable *mid day meal* is also a highly significant factor with p-value of <.01. The odds ratio of 0.103 suggests that students are more interested in going to schools where *mid day meal* is being provided.

It has been observed during data collection that the surroundings of the schools of those villages were very unhygienic and quite grubby. Students obviously want cleanliness of their schools, which is also supported by our data set. The p-value 0.007 suggests a highly significant case and the odds ratio of 0.126 indicates that less clean schools could attract fewer students as far as liking to go to school is concerned. Moreover, we wished to check whether students' fondness of the teachers have any effect on their students liking to go to school. A p-value of 0.012 shows significant effect of the students' fondness of the teachers on their liking to go to school. The corresponding odds ratio (0.036) suggests that students disliking of the teachers have negative impact on students liking for going to school.

Furthermore, reward by teachers significantly (p-value being 0.015) influences students liking for going to school. Students not rewarded by teachers are less wiling to go to school as compared to those rewarded by teachers as evidenced by the odds ratio of 0.132. Additionally, we considered another variable called comfortable with the language in which classes are being taught. The p-value indicates a significant effect of the variable on students liking for going to school. The corresponding odds ratio suggests that those who have no problem with the language in which classes are taught are more willing to go to school.

Conclusions

The analysis reveals that the Tiwas are an agro-based community. Their educational background as well as economic condition is very poor. Large section of the people was devoid of basic amenities of life. Similarly, infrastructural facilities in schools are also very poor. However, financial problems in their family, and loss of interest in studies or non comprehension of the syllabi, lack of connection of school knowledge with life, etc. are the prominent reasons for drop out. The mid day meal has been highly significant in increasing the enrolment in school. The unhygienic and filthy surroundings of the schools, fondness of the teachers, reward by teachers and comfortability with the medium of instruction significantly influence students liking for going to school. It has also been felt that with the Right to Education Act (RTE) and *Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan* (RMSA) coming in a big way, immediate attention to the infrastructural quality enhancement and teacher training with new dimension of teaching as outlined in RTE, should get immediate attention.

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