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Identifying Causes of and Solutions for Relatively Low Transition in Education from Upper Primary level to Secondary among girls from the SC communities in transitional areas of Lucknow, UP : A Qualitative Study.

Abstract - This study seeks to examine the causes of high dropout and low transition from upper primary level to secondary among girls from the Scheduled Caste (SC) community in Lucknow, UP, India. Based on existing gap, this particular study specially focuses on the transitional areas/urban village landscape to collect information. It also strives to look at solutions and follows a comparative approach, keeping both a target group and a control group.

This is essentially an exploratory study and is supported by qualitative data. For the purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted in 30 households from the SC community where the target girl has completed upper-primary education but not transitioned to secondary level. In-depth interviews were also conducted in 30 control households from the general caste/non-SC community where the target girl has completed upper-primary education and transitioned to secondary level and their respective parent/guardian (n = 30), recruited purposively from 3 villages from the district of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

The findings of the study show that poverty is a core deterrent to transition from upper primary to secondary levels among girls from SC community, whereas lack of toilet, caste based discrimination, perceived lack of safety for travelling further to continue secondary education and lack of perceived return from education were other important deterrents to transition. Also sibling spillover effect was higher among the target group than among the control group. Education for girls across castes, seem to partially be a tool to make the girl more 'marriageable'. The perceived level of such marriage-worthy education is however perceived to be higher among the general caste.

Based on the findings, recommendations such as subsidized access to secondary education, especially for girls among the SC community and creating better awareness and linkage to various schemes such as NSIGSE and provisions under Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan/SCSP can be useful. Sensitization of teachers towards inclusion, creating better infrastructure as well as role models within the community, is some of the other recommendations.

Key Words : Education, SC Girls, Dropout, Discrimination, Low Transition, Community.

Introduction

The importance of 'education' can be gauged from the point that it has been a focus point for both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A core reason for its importance is that education is not only a significant requirement in itself but is also a tool that can help achieve other SDGs. So it is important both as a stand-alone goal and as a means to attain some of the other goals.

44

45 However, despite such widespread acceptance of the importance of education, the challenge of
46 child drop out is a universal challenge and it is estimated that out-of-school children and
47 educational gaps cost the global economy \$10,000 billion a yearⁱ.

48 In India, the challenge of drop-outs is not uniform and gender, caste and regional variations have
49 been noticed. Here the low transition and high level of drop out among children from the SC
50 community, even more so among the girls, has been a cause for concern. Hence understanding
51 the cause thereof is important.

52 Studies to understand these causes need to be conducted also in the transitional areas/urban
53 villages instead of being restricted mainly to the rural areas and a few urban pockets. This will
54 ensure that a broader geographical perspective is developed in this context. Here, a solution
55 driven approach is desirable, which builds understanding both of the barriers and enablers and
56 provides information for decision and policy making for improvement.

57 It is in this context that the current exploratory/qualitative study has been conceived with focus on
58 transition from upper primary/class 8 to secondary/class 9 levels. It is based on findings from
59 5 transitional/urban villages in Lucknow district of Uttar Pradesh with their peculiar dynamics. The
60 study takes a comparative approach in covering girls from SC households and those from non-SC
61 households.

62 **Literature Review**

63 According to Census 2011 data, the literacy rate among the SC community in India was found to
64 be 66.10% while that overall for all castes was found to be 73.00%. Thus literacy rate of the SCs
65 was lower than the average. That among SC girls was lower still with only approximately 56.5%
66 among them found to be literate. A reportⁱⁱ has also pointed out to the lower Gross Enrolment
67 Ratio (GER) for grades from I to VIII and literacy among SCs.

68 Various sources have also found that the transition level among SCs from upper primary to
69 secondary was lower as compared to that of students from all castes combined. A reportⁱⁱⁱ based
70 on analysis of secondary data mentions that nearly 62.57% SC children drop out by the time they
71 reach upper primary level. A SEQI report^{iv} points out that the upper primary level to secondary
72 transition rate from was lower among SCs as compared to the general category by as much as
73 22.8% in Uttar Pradesh.

74 The disparity in relatively higher levels of education is also notable. A 2019–2020 report from the
75 Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) found that 1 in 5 SCs dropped out of
76 classes IX and X, while only 1 in 9 general category students dropped out. An ESAG report^v
77 mentions that the proportion of students among SCs who passed the secondary school board
78 examinations in 2016 was 73%, which is lower than that of all castes, at 78%. Data from a
79 AISHE survey^{vi} shows that the estimated Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education
80 for the age group 18- 23 years in India is 28.4 while that for the Scheduled Castes, the GER is
81 25.9.

82 Secondary data available mentions various findings on this matter. It has been found that poverty
83 enhances disparities and is a strong determinant of participation in secondary schooling^{vii}. Also
84 gender bias, often with relatively early marriage among girls has also been a cause of low
85 transition in education among girls^{viii}. The school distance/ safety and restricted mobility with the

86 onset of puberty were also found to be a strong barrier among girls for transition to secondary
87 level^{ix}.

88 Overall, transition rates among girls have been historically lower than that among boys. Yet,
89 various studies show that educating girls can often ensure better returns to themselves and to
90 the society. An USAID study^x points out that while educating girls and boys produces similar
91 outputs in terms of their subsequent earnings and future opportunities, educating girls results in
92 greater socio-economic gains, which is of value to the entire community. Study findings^{xi} have
93 also shown that education can help increase a girl's sense of voice and choice within her
94 household.

95 This study thus aims to form understanding on the enablers and disablers of the transition from
96 upper primary/class 8 to secondary/class 9 levels for the SC girl child in transitional/urban
97 villages.

98 **The Relevance of Choosing Upper Primary Level to Secondary Transition**

99 An important factor that has been kept in mind while choosing transition level is the RTE Act.
100 This Right to Education Act (RTE) of 2009 is an act of the Parliament of India, which holds for
101 children up to upper primary level, wherein it guarantees them free and compulsory education.
102 The act came into force on April 1, 2010 and holds true for children in the age group of 6 and 14
103 years.

104 The consequence of the RTE Act is that children up to the upper primary level have certain free
105 entitlements that ensure that education for them can be absolutely free in government schools.
106 This involves access to free stationary, free textbooks and also free uniforms. Also, students till
107 upper primary level are provided with nutrition support of access to midday meals through PM-
108 Poshan.

109 Also, the number of government schools up to upper primary level far outweighs the number of
110 government schools up to secondary level. As a consequence there are lesser schools in the
111 neighborhood if one chooses to enroll and attend secondary level education. This relatively
112 longer travel distance to transit to secondary education often has time and cost implications.

113 Taken together, these factors may be causes for relatively low transition at this crucial stage of
114 education and thus the transition dynamics at this stage need special focus.

115 **Brief Background Information of SCs in India**

116 It is relevant to submit a basic insight of the SCs to create a base for comparison of the findings
117 of this study.

118 According to the 2011 census, 16.6% of India's population comprises of Scheduled Caste (SC).
119 Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of people in the country, belonging to the Scheduled caste
120 community. In percentage terms too, the share of SCs in total population in Uttar Pradesh is
121 20.7% is higher than the national average.

122 The Scheduled Castes or the Dalits are one of the most vulnerable groups and are seen as low
123 castes in the social strata and remain among the most oppressed section of the Indian
124 community. In fact, various studies have come up with findings that point towards various types
125 of marginalization of SCs, ranging from higher malnutrition, lower education and transition in
126 education and higher cases of abuses and atrocities. Thus the SCs have been identified as

127 economically weak, educationally backward, generally found as doing all different types of odd
128 jobs, ranging from scavenging to other cleanliness jobs.

129 Given such vulnerability and marginalization, it is of even greater consequence to understand
130 their lower transition levels to higher classes and into higher levels of education, so as to devise
131 better strategies keeping such findings in mind and gradually enhance parity and inclusion.

132

133 **Methodology**

134 A qualitative study was undertaken in transitional areas/urban villages in the district of Lucknow
135 in the state of Uttar Pradesh. 30in-depth semi-structured interviews with SC girls (N = 30) and
136 their parents/guardians (N = 30) in 5 villages in Lucknow district were conducted.Girls from the
137 SC community who had transited from primary level to upper primary but had not transited from
138 upper primary level to secondary were covered in this category.

139 Simultaneously, a control group was taken and 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews with girls
140 from the general caste (N = 30) and their parents/guardians (N = 30) in 5 villages in Lucknow
141 district were conducted.Girls from the non-SC community who had transited from upper primary
142 to secondary were covered in this category.

143 The interviews covered the themes of peripheral education, education status of female siblings,
144 perceived learning in school before dropping out, discrimination and possible triggers for being
145 re-enrolled in school and were tailored to the roles and needs of the participants/respondents.

146 Given the qualitative approach, purposive sampling was used to identify participants for the
147 research so as to explicitly select participants from whom appropriate data can be generated.
148 Effort was taken to choose similar households in peripheral areas from the target and the control
149 groups, in terms of economic and source of earnings profile, with as little variation as possible
150 between the target group and control group. However, given the peripheral framework and
151 purposive approach, some variations between the two groups were noted and are mentioned
152 later in this study.

153 A semi-structured qualitative tool was developed. A coding framework was created and codes
154 were updated with continued data familiarization. The interpretation of the findingswas based on
155 the aims and objectives of the research as well as the dominant themes evolvingfrom the data.

156 Research investigators who had prior experience working in education centric research studies
157 were shortlisted and briefed to conduct the interviews.

158 **Brief Respondent Profile**

159 **i. Age of Respondents**

160 The respondents from the target group, i.e. girls from the SC community who had completed
161 class VIII, were selected. There ages varied between 12 and 14 years as given in **Table 1** below:

	12 years	13 years	14 years
Frequency by age of respondents	5	8	17

Percentage by age of respondents	16.67	26.67	56.67
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162

163 The respondents from the control group, in this case, the 30 adolescent girls from the non-
 164 SC/general caste community, who have transited from upper primary to secondary, were, as
 165 mentioned, also purposively selected. These girls are enrolled in and attending secondary
 166 education. There ages varied between 13 and 15 years as given in **Table 2** below:

	13 years	14 years	15 years
Frequency by age of respondents	6	16	11
Percentage by age of respondents	20	53.33	36.67

167

168 The age of the girls from the non-SC community was slightly higher as only girls who had already
 169 transited to the next class were selected.

170 **ii. Household Size**

171 The modal size of the SC households covered in this study was found to be 6, with 30% of the
 172 respondents coming from households consisting of 6 members, wherein household size has
 173 been defined by the number of family members that share the same kitchen.

174 The size of the households varied between 3 and 8 members as given in **Table 3** below:

HH Size of SC respondents	
Size of HH	Frequency of Respondents
3	1
4	3
5	7
6	9
7	7
8	3
Total	30

175

176 The modal household size of the control group was found to be 5, with approximately 33% of the
 177 respondents coming from households consisting of 5 members.

178 The size of the households varied between 3 and 7 members as given in **Table 4** below:

HH Size of non-SC respondents

Size of HH	Frequency of Respondents
3	4
4	7
5	10
6	5
7	4
Total	30

179

180 Thus, the non-SC families were found to be slightly smaller in size on an average, with 70% of
 181 the selected households having a size of 5 or less members and approximately 87% of the
 182 selected households having a size of 6 or less members. In contrast approximately 67% of the
 183 selected SC households had a size 6 or less members.

184 **iii. Economic Status**

185 This study was essentially conceived to be an exploratory, largely un-structured study with
 186 purposive sampling. Broad, unstructured and relatively similar economic status was taken into
 187 consideration to purposively select control group households relatively peripheral to the target
 188 households. The households were later economically categorized based on the findings.

189 The core method of categorizing the households in this study, including both the SC and the non-
 190 SC households, was observation and open ended questioning to generate answers and then
 191 create a basic list of SLI/Standard of Living Index parameters, based on the answers. This list of
 192 parameters consisted of both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

193 The quantitative factors that were considered are: Nature of house (whether kuccha, pucca or
 194 semi-pucca), ownership of TV, ownership of cycle, ownership of motorcycle, ownership and size
 195 of land.

196 This was reinforced with qualitative data on the type of dress worn and food consumed in the
 197 target households, to have a broader perspective of their economic status.

198 Based on this set of basic economic parameters collected from the study households, they were
 199 categorized as 'poor', 'very poor' and 'middle income' to form the findings of the study. Although,
 200 very few households conformed to this criteria, the third category of 'middle income' households
 201 was relevant to creating an exhaustive list.

202 The study defines these three categories as:

203 Very Poor Households

204 The 'very poor households' conformed to at least 6 of the 7 criteria on the list given in **Table 5**
 205 below:

Sl. No	Table 5: Categorization of HH as 'very poor'	
	Commodities/Privileges	Status
1.	Ownership of Cycle	Yes
2.	Ownership of TV	No

3.	Ownership of Motorcycle	No
4.	Ownership of land	No
5.	Type of house	Semi-pucca/brick walls with mud floors and thatched/tin roofs
6.	Condition of clothes	Relatively tattered/had patchwork to make them wearable
7.	Core food items consumed	Mostly rice/roti but with vegetable/pulse in less than half of the meals

206

207 Poor Households

208 The 'poor households' conformed to at least 6 of the 7 items on the list given in **Table 6** below:

Sl. No.	Table 6: Categorization of HH as 'poor'	
	Commodities/Privileges	Status
1.	Ownership of Cycle	Yes
2.	Ownership of TV	No
3.	Ownership of Motorcycle	No
4.	Ownership of land less than 2 hectares	No
5.	Type of house	Semi-pucca/brick walls with mud floors and thatched/tin roofs
6.	Condition of clothes	Old but un-tattered/ without patchwork holding it together
7.	Core food items consumed	Rice/roti with occasional vegetable/pulse with some of the meals

209

210 Middle Income Households

211 The 'middle income households' conformed to at least 6 of the 7 items on the list given in **Table**
 212 **7** below:

Sl. No.	Table 7: Categorization of HH as 'poor'	
	Commodities/Privileges	Status
1.	Ownership of Cycle	Yes
2.	Ownership of TV	Yes
3.	Ownership of Motorcycle	Yes
4.	Ownership of land less than 2 hectares	Yes
5.	Type of house	Semi-pucca/brick walls with mud/brick floors and thatched/tin roofs
6.	Condition of clothes	Old but un-tattered/ without patchwork holding it together
7.	Core food items consumed	Rice/roti with vegetable/pulse with most of the meals

213

214 Based on the findings, the households were categorized as 'poor', 'very poor' and 'middle
215 income'.

216 The details of the number of SC and non-SC households falling under these three categories are
217 shown in **Table 8** as follows:

	SC Households	Non-SC Households
Frequency of 'Very Poor' Households	26	14
Frequency of 'Poor' Households	4	14
Frequency of 'Middle Income' Households	0	2
Total	30	30

218 Data collected from the target households reveal that the SC households were in general poorer
219 than the non-SC households.

220 iv. Source of Income

221 This study also tried to understand the source of income of the target households. The findings
222 show that the core source of income of the SC households was through daily wage labor and/or
223 agricultural labor. The daily wage earners travelled to peripheral areas in search of odd jobs that
224 utilized them for a day to a few days. These jobs were essentially of a manual and unskilled
225 nature.

226 Most of the Non-SC households had small parcels of land and while their source of core income
227 was also as daily wage laborers, most of them also earned something from their land.

228 In a few cases in the non-SC households, the chief wage earner was found to have migrated to
229 other parts of India and were working thereas contractual laborers.

230

231 **Findings about Siblings and Implications on transition**

232 **i. Sibling Size**

233 It was found that respondents from the SC households had more siblings as compared to their
234 non-SC counterparts. This partially also explains a relatively bigger household size of the SC
235 households. Only 1 respondent from the selected SC households had no siblings whereas 5
236 respondents from the selected non-SC households had no siblings. Thus, in the non-SC
237 households covered by this study, approximately 17% households have only one child.

238 **ii. Bias towards Education of the Male Child in the SC Households**

239 Overall in the SC households, a bias towards education of the male child was noticed up to their
240 completion of secondary level education.

241 In the study, it was found that all male siblings in the age group of 15-17 years of the SC girls
242 (who have not transited from upper primary to secondary education), were studying in school.
243 These male siblings were found to have transited from upper primary level to secondary level
244 and were studying either in class IX or in class X

245 However, the transition even among the male siblings in the households was found to be poor
246 after completion of secondary level education. None of the male siblings in the SC households, in
247 the age group of 20-26 years were found to be currently studying (no male siblings in the age
248 group of 18-19 were noted in the SC households in this study).

249 **iii. Sibling Spillover Effect**

250 Overall a sibling spillover effect was noted in this study. There were 23 siblings in the SC
251 households that were aged 15 years or above and were found to be studying, among a total of
252 43 siblings. Thus, approximately 53% of the siblings in the SC households in the age group of 15
253 and above were found to be studying.

254 In the non-SC households covered in this study, there were 18 siblings who were aged 15 or
255 above who were found to be studying, among a total of 21 siblings. Thus, approximately 86% of
256 the siblings in the non-SC households in the age group of 15 and above were found to be
257 studying.

258 This shows that the percentage of siblings who had dropped out of the education net in the post-
259 upper primary age group was higher among the SC households covered in this study compared
260 to the non-SC households. In contrast there was far better transition to higher education among
261 the siblings of the control group the general caste/non-SC category.

262 **iv. Causes for Siblings' Dropping out of Education**

263 The core factor of siblings, whether male or female, dropping out of the education net in SC
264 households was found to be economic.

265 In each case, it was mentioned that poverty or lack of economic ability was the core cause owing
 266 to which the concerned sibling could not study further. In the case of female siblings, almost all
 267 siblings that were not studying were also found to have been married. Thus the core cause for
 268 dropping out of education after upper-primary level appears to be poverty/economic inability,
 269 whereas the supporting cause, particularly in case of girls, appears to be marriage.

270 Data also supports the causes mentioned by the respondents. In each case, only siblings above
 271 the upper primary age/bracket (equal to or more than 16 years) or below school going age (less
 272 than 5 years) were found not to be going to school. Especially siblings in the 6-14 years' age
 273 bracket of all girls from the SC community covered by this study were found to be going to school.

274 **Perception of Quality of Learning at School**

275 Perception varied of how useful the 30 respondents from the SC community found the schools to
 276 which the SC girls covered in this study did their schooling up to class VIII. Overall the
 277 respondents appeared to be divided and half of them mentioned that the school helped them to
 278 learn new things either 'to a fair extent' or 'to a large extent'. 80% of the students found their
 279 schools useful between some extent to a large extent and yet discontinued education after class
 280 VIII/completing upper primary.

281 The perceived usefulness of schooling among the participants is shown in **Table 9** below:

Perceived learning in School among SC Respondents		
	Frequency of respondents	Percentage of respondents
To a very little/little extent	6	20
To some extent	9	30
To a fair extent	9	30
To a large extent	6	20
Total	30	100

282

283 This reinforces the finding that they may have been forced to drop out of the education net owing
 284 to economic difficulty in pursuing further education.

285

286 **Perceptions and Findings on Caste Based Discrimination**

287 This study made an effort to understand whether the 30 girls selected from the SC households
 288 faced any kind of discrimination in school. Both direct discussion and forming understanding
 289 through indirect mode of approach were covered.

290 When directly and specifically asked whether they perceived any kind of caste based
 291 discrimination in school, most of the respondents mentioned that they had not experienced any
 292 caste based discrimination in school.

293 But approximately one quarter of the respondents did mention that they had faced discrimination
 294 in their schools. The few that faced such discrimination spoke of the following types of
 295 discrimination:

- 296 • Felt somewhat segregated from the other children as their sitting arrangements both during
297 class hours and during mid-day meals, was slightly segregated compared to the children of
298 the higher castes.
- 299 • Felt neglected as they were often relegated to back benches, were seldom engaged in the
300 classroom or much spoken to.
- 301 • Were sometimes told to do minor cleaning tasks in school, for which children from the upper
302 castes were not selected.

303 However, while most of the children did not mention of any visible discrimination on the basis of
304 caste, the caste of their closest friend circle, points to a kind of tacit discrimination. It was found
305 that the closest school friends of approximately 73% of the girls from the SC community, chosen
306 as respondents, also belong to the Scheduled Caste community and were Chamar, Pasi etc.

307 The remaining 27% also did not have any friends from the general caste. Instead, most of their
308 friends were from the Other Backward Classes/OBCs such as Teli and Kurmi. A few also had
309 Muslim friends.

310 None of the 30 SC respondents selected for this study had friends from the upper castes or
311 general castes. Thus, although they did not mention any direct cases of discrimination, their
312 friend circle appears to have been formed on a pattern of discrimination. This tangentially points
313 at some soft discrimination on ease of mixing due to caste barrier.

314 **SC Respondents' Barriers for Dropping out of Education System and** 315 **Mentioned Enablers**

316 **i. Barriers for Dropping Out**

317 The different respondents from the SC households stated different causes/barriers for the
318 sampled SC girl not having transited to secondary level of education. Some of them mentioned
319 multiple reasons.

320 A good share of the respondents mentioned financial reasons for the child having dropped out of
321 the education net. It may be referred here that the RTE does not apply to secondary level and
322 thus the domain of 'free' education often ends here (ref section: The Relevance of Choosing
323 Upper Primary Level to Secondary Transition).

324 Some households (approximately 67 percent of the households) mentioned that owing to the
325 distance of the secondary school/composite school, the parents do not find the travel distance
326 safe for the girl and this also demotivated them to enroll their daughter at this level. In a few
327 cases, the respondents mentioned that they do not think their daughters will get scope for jobs by
328 completing schooling till secondary or higher secondary level. Thus, they see no linkage between
329 schooling and economic returns from it.

330 Gender inequality appeared to be a core factor for the girl not having transited to secondary level
331 of education in some families. This was already tangentially captured from the section on status
332 of education of the siblings, which showed that male siblings, as against their female
333 counterparts, were enrolled and completed/were completing secondary level of education in the
334 selected households. This was reiterated by the parents of the 30 SC girls in the target group. A
335 few parents pointed out that it is not required that girls should study further. Instead, girls are
336 expected to stay at home, look after their siblings and do household chores.

337 Respondents from a couple of households also mentioned that they were looking to marry off
338 their daughters and the education that she has already received is sufficient for the purpose.

339 Overall, there appeared to be a consensus among several households that the necessity for girls
340 to study is limited and studying till upper primary/class 8 allows the girl to fulfill basic needs for
341 education, namely ability to read and write and be marriageable.

342 Respondents from a couple of households also mentioned that there are no instances in the
343 peripheral community where a girl from the SC community has gone into higher studies and has
344 done well. Thus, there also appears to be a lack of role models in these communities.

345 Respondents from a few households also mentioned that the school does not have a separate
346 functional toilet for girls and this proves to be challenging. This difficulty further intensifies during
347 the time of menstruation.

348 In a few cases, the respondents also pointed out about discrimination that the selected child has
349 faced in school has also deterred the child from further continuation of studies. This is in sync
350 with findings from this study, which earlier shows that a few selected children had faced caste
351 based discrimination in school.

352 In very few cases, the selected child has mentioned that she does not enjoy studying and does
353 not want to study further.

354 *Overall, the emerging trend thus appears to be economic – the necessity to spend money during*
355 *secondary level (classes 9 and 10) education coupled with any lack of economic ‘returns’ that*
356 *they foresee by investing in the child’s education. Here, the main onus for the child’s lack of*
357 *transition seems to rest with the parents and their perceived cost-benefit analysis on secondary*
358 *level education as well as their perception on the lack importance of secondary education.*

359 *This core deterrent, coupled with gender bias, and other smaller deterrents of caste*
360 *discrimination and also unavailability of suitable transport and toilet facilities, has resulted in the*
361 *non-transition of these children from the SC households to the next level of education. Supply-*
362 *side factors essentially include lack of enabling infrastructure, caste inclusion and also poor*
363 *quality of education, manifested in the child’s lack of desire to ‘study’.*

364 **ii. Suggested Enablers**

365 The respondents also mentioned enablers/solutions to enhance transition from upper primary to
366 secondary level. The three main solutions proposed by them were:

- 367 - Improve school infrastructure, especially critical facilities such as toilets
- 368 - Provide scholarship/provision for free education so that the economic burden for further
369 education can be averted
- 370 - Create a less discriminatory and more inclusive environment in school

371 **Enablers among non-SC Respondents for Transitioning to Secondary Education**

372 While this study tried to understand the barriers for upper primary to secondary transition among
373 girls from the SC community, it also tried to gauge the enablers among the girls from the control
374 group.

375 The core findings that come across are that the parents are driven by homogeneity as more girls
376 from the peripheral community are completing at least higher secondary education. Also they feel

377 that this is a qualification that makes their girls more marriageable. Some parents also saw
378 education as a safety net for their daughters, which will allow them to read important documents,
379 including legal and property documents. Some parents also felt that education is an enabler to
380 accessing rights and thus wanted to educate their daughters. Finally, a few parents also pointed
381 out that they enrolled their daughter to the next level of education, because their daughter wishes
382 to study and they wish to support her in it.

383

384 **Recommendations**

385 Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are provided:

- 386 i. The findings of the study show that poverty continues to remain a core deterrent to
387 transition from upper primary to secondary levels among girls from SC community. Hence
388 financial relief/support measures need to be considered. This can be in the form of
389 providing subsidized access to secondary education, especially for girls and creating
390 better awareness and linkage to various schemes such as NSIGSE that provide support
391 to education at secondary level. Linkage to provisions under Scheduled Caste Sub-
392 Plan/SCSP can only be useful, provided it is supported by advocacy for better
393 implementation of the SCSP.
- 394 ii. Behavior Change Communication/BCC campaigns with multi-pronged objectives need to
395 be developed and run with the SC communities. The core objectives of such BCC
396 campaigns would be to enhance the awareness on importance of education for girls and
397 the need of their voice and choice. The parents/guardians as well as the adolescent girls
398 themselves need to be beneficiaries of such campaigns. This will enable them to stop
399 perceiving education as just a doorway to literacy and one of the prerequisites to making
400 the girl marriageable, as was found in this study.
- 401 iii. Breaking gender stereotypes and creating community role models through targeted
402 intervention could be useful in creating a sense of direction and motivation among the
403 target groups. The findings of the study show the absence of peripheral role models who
404 have broken gender stereotypes and created belief in the financial and non-financial
405 returns of education for girls, which, eventually, became a barrier to transition.
- 406 iv. Finally, improving supply side dynamics, such as through teachers' sensitization training
407 towards creating inclusive atmosphere in schools; creating better school and toilet
408 infrastructure etc. can be useful in removing the barriers of discrimination and also in
409 reducing infrastructure driven drop outs. This calls for better implementation of acts and
410 schemes already in place.

411 **Conclusion**

412 Overall, the study has thrown up interesting findings. It has also shown that education for girls
413 across castes, seem to partially be a tool to make the girl more 'marriageable'. The perceived
414 level of such marriage-worthy education is however perceived higher among the general caste,
415 that look for at least secondary level education, whereas among the SC community this
416 'marriage-worthy' level seems to be upper primary. Also, the share of parents/guardians among
417 the general caste that consider education as a tool of 'marriage-worthiness' for girls is relatively
418 lower.

419 At the same time the parents/guardians in the non-SC/general caste households appear to be
420 more aware of diverse benefits of education, such as as a tool to girls' rights, tool to ensuring

421 legal safety etc. A greater sense of societal conformity is also pushing greater transition among
422 the general castes.

423 The learning from the control group needs to be in-built in implementations so that the target
424 group can also be uplifted to at least the same level. Finally, removing caste based discrimination
425 is a pre-requisite and deep rooted social stigma must be addressed not only among the
426 community but first, among the service providers such as teachers, to be able to make a definite
427 impact.

428 **References**

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