

Insights into the Behaviour of Rural Indians - An Attempt to Discover Views on Education and Development

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Abstract

The paper examines rural Indians' perspectives on education and related aspects of life. This population has its own notions, practices, judgments, and opinions, which are often the results of their historical experiences, traditional living style, and cultural values and practices. With the awakening of development, education has become one of the most crucial factors of quality living. Fortunately, even rural India has started accepting the change and the wave of education and development. Yet there is a long way to go. Keeping the same in mind, this research provides an overview of the mentality, psychology, beliefs, and thoughts of the people related to education and development in rural India. The research develops around the survey conducted in a rural village of North India (Uttar Pradesh), which collected the opinions and views people hold on subjects related to education and development in rural India. The indifference for schooling because of high expenditures, gender bias on the educational front, lack of parental motivation for quality and higher education, irregular attendance at schools, and low aspirations among villages because of poverty dynamics are some of the findings that the paper discusses. Furthermore, the collected data of the survey provides a peek into the lives of rural people, who form almost 65% of the population, with an emphasis on the rural developmental factors.

Keywords: Rural India, Education in Rural Region, Development, Behaviour of People

Introduction and Background Studies

Psychology, in recent times, has proved to be one of the most sought-after disciplines when it comes to understanding people and their behaviour. Behavioural psychology or behaviourism, in particular, is a systematic way to understand human behaviour (Rachlin et al.,

1981). Psychology, in recent times, has proved to be one of the most sought-after disciplines when it comes to understanding people and their behaviour. According to this approach, behaviour is either a reflex or consequence evoked by a stimulus in the environment. Thus, the environment has a crucial role when it comes to determining behaviour. On a similar note, this research aims to gather knowledge about the psychology of people living in rural India and their opinions about education, an inevitable life aspect of modern India. Rural people are those who reside in Indian villages and are often involved in the primary sector of the economy such as agriculture, fishing etc. (Lerche, 2009). The rural living conditions and the surroundings of Indian villages influence the behaviour for most of the part. Reflecting on education and development, all individuals have their views and stances, which are shaped by their environmental conditions and vary from person to person (Lerche, 2009).

India is a country of 1.3 billion people, and 67% of these people belong to rural India (Phad, 2020). According to Unified District Information System for Education for the year 2015-16, approximately 146 million students attend rural elementary education (Phad, 2020). Though most children seem to attend school at the rural level, problems and challenges have made them a little indifferent to education, and irregular at schools (Phad, 2020). There are various explanations to why students and parents are reluctant to invest their time and capital in education in the rural regions: lack of motivation among people, high costs of schooling, child labour, and poor quality of education at public schools (Drèze & Kingdon, 2001). Moreover, it has been noted that the rural people, especially the poor, have low aspirations, and they create mental models about their futures that have limited scope (Tanguy et al., 2014).

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Sometimes individuals form aspirations on the basis of the outcomes of other individuals whose behaviour can be observed and related to them (Tanguy et al., 2014). When it comes to females, the institution of early marriage brings down the idea for educational attainment (Chager, 2014). These facts and statements show certain attitudes of the rural population towards schooling and education and its influence on their development and lives. The age-old practices and the societal norms have moulded their thinking and behaviour a lot (Daga, 2014). Another work reveals that credit constraint helps us to conclude whether the parents are capable of investing in children's schooling, and it also affects their financial resource allocation (Behrman, 1995). Such factors and psychology of people have started shaping rural society in many different ways. Understanding the same and working on it can lead to a better lifestyle and a proper education for the rural people in India (Haines et al., 2017). A relative research states that human capital is a product of native talent and the fruit of education, which is produced by school attendance and study outside school hours using educational inputs like books, tuitions, and writing material (Cigno et al., 2001). This shows the importance of education in framing the country's human capital. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the rural approach to the same.

In a study, it was found that human development and economic growth can occur only when one ensures the well-being of the population living in the villages of India (Singh, 2002). Thus, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of rural development, prolonged deprivations and its influence on perceptions and cognitive skills, poverty and its impact on human behaviour, rural leadership, and attitudinal change (Singh, 2002). To simplify the same, this paper approaches to explore the behavioural psychology of rural Indians in accordance to their lives and their reactions towards schooling, modern education, and development that is thoroughly shaped by their immediate environment. This study aims to collect opinion of people of rural community to understand their reaction towards education and development. Social psychologists state that people tend to have perspectives about their self-efficacy based on the experience of other in their immediate surrounding (Bandura et al, 1977). This paper also dwells in this aspect of the society. This study looks forward to unveil the notions people tend to have in rural regions.

India needs to realise the emerging national issues and evolve well-planned strategies for sustainable development. It is crucial to ensure the well-being of the population living in the villages of India. The rural population, especially the poor, suffer from multiple deprivations such as lack of education, health, and income. In order to curb such limitations, we need to address these issues psychologically. It is essential to collect people's views on the conditions of education and development at their ends (Singh, 2002). Taking the same into consideration, our study focuses on exploring the beliefs and opinions rural Indians hold towards education and development.

Rural school authorities see education as a means to development. School education is essential for becoming a productive citizen. The role of teachers and administrators is to 'motivate' and 'create awareness' among rural students and parents who lack understanding of the benefits of education. Girls are intelligent and hardworking but constrained by cultural and familial gender roles (Moraji, 2016). Parents have opposite views on education and development. Parents seemed to be disappointed and expressed their relationship with educated youth in terms of breakdown of communities and respect (Moraji, 2016). They articulated their anger and bitterness towards such behaviour, and they held schooling and education responsible for the changes. In the case of youths, young female students relate education to self-improvement and personal transformation. Though they have high expectations from education, they have less choices and freedom to pursue higher education due to the dominant male society interventions and parental opposition. The male youth viewed education as a means to employment in a non-manual environment, but they were conflicted when education was linked with moral degeneration by the adults (Moraji, 2016).

In rural India, the household decision of sending a kid to school requires the consideration of the cost of education, expected returns from education and schooling, social conditions, and gender roles (Drèze & Kingdon, 2001). Henceforth, the rural people start perceiving education and development based on these factors and decisions. The choices related to education and development are jointly made by parents and children, whose interest may not always coincide. Parental motivation is a major force when it comes to educating younger generations. Parents are often reluctant to invest in education as they

are not assured of positive returns from education. Also, gender inequalities present the girl child with a constraint in gaining the education, especially higher (Drèze & Kingdon, 2001). It becomes interesting to explore the behavioural decisions taken by rural parents for education in India. This study also aims to unveil the psychology related to sending students for education in rural India.

Methodology

The research paper gathered rural Indians' views on education to abstract information about their behavioural psychology, mentality, notions, and environmental factors affecting their behaviour. A quantitative research method was carried out to collect data. The outcomes of such research are measurable and quantifiable. The population of interest for this study includes people from various age groups: 10-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60 and 61-above years old. The respondents are native of a village Ballasherpur in district Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, North India. The sample includes 100 individuals. Bias in the study was avoided by surveying people irrespective of their religion, caste, colour, or creed. For the data collection, a survey method was used. The online questionnaire was designed as a Google form. The questions were provided in both English and Hindi as the targeted individuals were from a Hindi speaking region. To achieve the objective of this paper, the result was drawn from the collected data. From the collected data, a graph for each item in the questionnaire was drafted to reach proper conclusions. The age of the individuals was considered as a comparative variable. The questions in the Google form have been provided below:

- Are the children at your home getting education? (Yes/ No)
- Will a better education system improve the condition of the village? (Yes/ No/ Maybe)
- Do you think schools are very important for quality education? (Yes/ No/ Maybe)
- Are you supportive of English as a more efficient medium for education even in rural areas? (Yes/ No)
- Which sector of education do you prefer? (Government schools/ Private schools)
- Do you support boys to attain education at both elementary and higher levels? (Yes/ No)
- Do you support girls to attain education at both elementary and higher levels? (Yes/ No)
- Can a rural student make a good career after receiving proper schooling? (Yes/ No)
- Would you allow a boy child to study out of town for more facilities and quality education? (Yes/ No)
- Would you allow a girl child to study out of town for more facilities and quality education? (Yes/ No)
- Do you think higher the education, higher the income? (Yes/ No)
- Do you think that education will also bring in happiness and satisfaction along with a good job? (Yes/ No)
- Would you support a girl to pursue a job and continue it after marriage as well? (Yes/ No)
- Do you feel that education has become one of the most inevitable parts of our lives? (Yes/ No)
- Is it possible to achieve success in the field of education if the person belongs to a low-income rural family? (Yes/ No)
- Do you believe that the spread of education in the village will solve all the challenges of the rural localities? (Yes/ No)
- In which sector would you like your family members to work after education completion? (Government sector/ Private sector/ Anyone of the above)
- Should the low-income agricultural rural families invest in education rather than in agriculture? (Yes/ No)
- Do you think boys and girls should be treated equally in all aspects, including education? (Yes/ No)
- Is the Indian government doing enough for rural education and schooling? (Yes/ No)

Result

The collected data from 100 participants was used to draw a result to make the study successful. The data shows that 92% participants are able to send the children at their homes to school, while 8% are unable to send the children to school (Supplementary material 1). Next, it has been found that 74% participants believe that a better education system can improve the condition of the villages, while 5% disagreed on the same. The rest

21% responded with a 'may be' response (Supplementary material 2). Further, 87% respondents think that schools are necessary for quality education, while 5% responded in negative. Another 8% opted 'may be' (Supplementary material 3). We also found that 77% of people support English as a medium of instruction at schools. On the other hand, 23% want Hindi to be the medium at schools (Supplementary material 4). Also, the survey shows that only 37% individuals prefer government schools, while the other 63% prefer private institutes for education (Supplementary material 5). When people were questioned about boys' education, 96% responded in affirmative (Supplementary material 6). On the contrary, when the question was about girls' education, only 83% agreed and the rest 17% disagreed (Fig. 1). The result also found that 94% participants believe that a rural student can make a good career after attaining education, while others answered in negative (Supplementary material 8). Moreover, the survey has found that 99% of respondents would allow boys to study out of town for better facilities, while only 82% want their girl child to study out of town for a bright future (Supplementary material 9 and 10).

When it comes to correlation of education with other life aspects, it has been seen that 78% people positively correlated higher education with higher income (Fig. 3). In addition, 89% respondents find education to be positively related with happiness and contentment in life (Fig. 4). Although villagers face challenges in the field of education, 94% participants still feel that education is an inevitable part of our lives (Supplementary material 14). Furthermore, 71% of subjects think that a child from a low-income rural family can achieve success with proper schooling, while the other 29% disagreed with the same (Supplementary material 15). Interestingly, it has been found that 54% participants prefer the government sector for jobs over private, 40% are comfortable with both sectors, and only 6% chose the private sector over the government sector (Supplementary material 17). According to them, the government sector is a better option for employees because it assures job security, paid leaves, government scheme benefits, and is less demanding. People are biased towards the private sector and have a prejudice that the private employers work in an unorganised manner and exploit work. One of the findings of the study is that 27% people from low-income agriculture families favour investment in agricultural implements, while 73% want to invest in education (Supplementary material 18). Next,

the result also indicates that 51% of people think that the Indian government is putting in enough efforts for better rural schooling, while the other 49% are not content with the government's efforts (Fig. 5).

Discussion

We found that most of the youth in the village are attending the school. Though most of the children are enrolled in schools, the regular attendance and active participation in the school seem amiss. When the participants were asked about the importance of education in the rural region, youths (10-20 years old) and adults (21-40 years old) supported the fact that education contributes to the development of rural India, while the people belonging to 60 years and above remained undecided and answered with the 'may be' response. Further, the youth individuals of the village credited the schools for quality education. On the other hand, the people belonging to the 60 years and above demographic stated that education is all about real-life experiences and schooling is just a medium, which is not always necessary to achieve success in life. This result provides us a peek into the mentality of the older people of these regions. They tend to value practical knowledge over factual and bookish education. A similar conclusion has been seen in a study that presents us with the information that elders are the knowledge keepers and this learning is a result of their practical indulgence and experiences (Haines, 2017). The younger generation of the village preferred English as medium of instruction in the schools, while the adults and elderly wanted students to study in their mother tongue, Hindi. When the private and government schools were compared, it was found that teenagers (10-20 age group) appreciated private institutes. On the contrary, their parents (31-50 age groups) and grandparents (51-61 and above age groups) thought that government schools are better. This can be an indication towards the fact that the young people took the quality with exposure to new technology into account, while the elders considered the cost of education along with other factors (Haines, 2017). The results from the accumulated data shows us the distinctions between the behaviour of people from different generations. Their behaviour and psychology seems to be influenced largely by their surroundings and peers.

Opinions and information were also gathered about gender inequality in the village. It seems that people

who were attending schools or colleges supported women’s education and equality. These people belonged to the age group of 10-20 years and 21-30 years. These age groups supported girls’ education (Fig. 1), but they were reluctant to completely drop all discriminatory practices against girls. Though few individuals from

the age group of 60 years and above were supportive of women empowerment and equality, others in the same age group didn’t share the same idea (Fig. 2). However, almost all the age groups in the study were in support of boys’ education and freedom to pursue their choice of career.

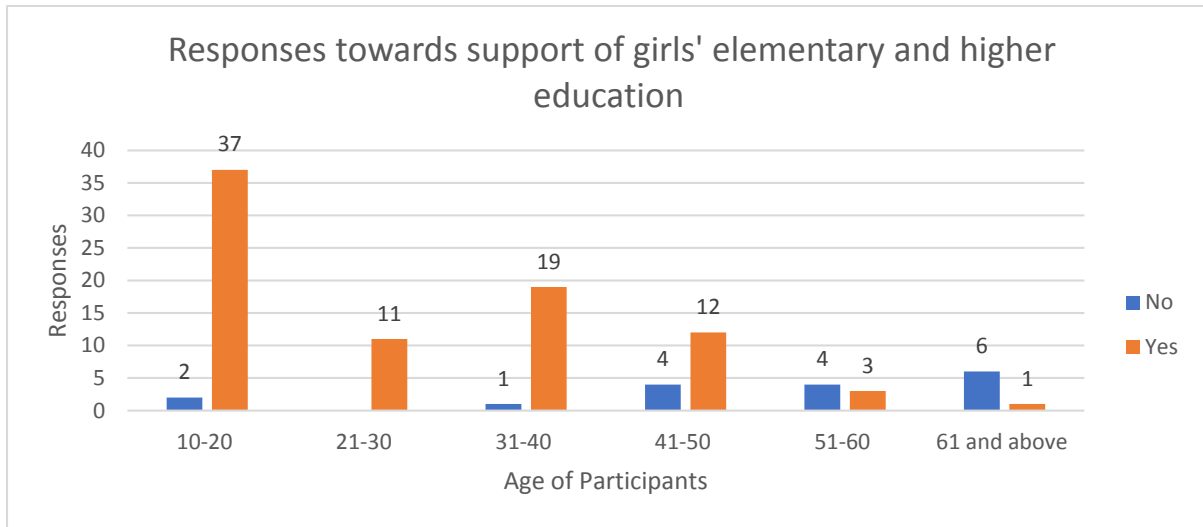


Fig. 1: Graph Depicting Responses of People toward Girls’ Education at Elementary and Higher Level

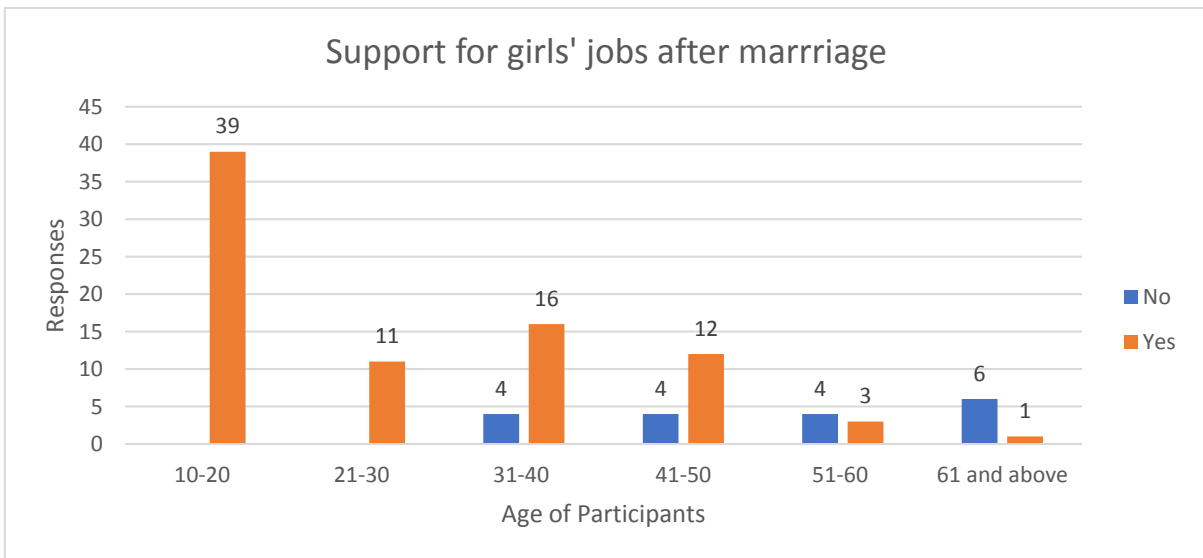


Fig. 2: Graph Showing Responses towards Supporting a Girl Pursuing a Job After Marriage

The result pertaining to questions that assessed for other aspects such as income, happiness, and contentment, we get to know how people in rural India relate education with these factors. As per Fig. 3, it can be understood that almost all the age groups perceive the relationship between education and income positively. Very few individuals

answered in the negative. It shows us that the rural people consider education as the most important factor to get a good income. Moreover, education is seen as a reinforcer for happiness and contentment by all the age groups, except the age group of 60 years and above who does not see any such relation between education and happiness (Fig. 4).

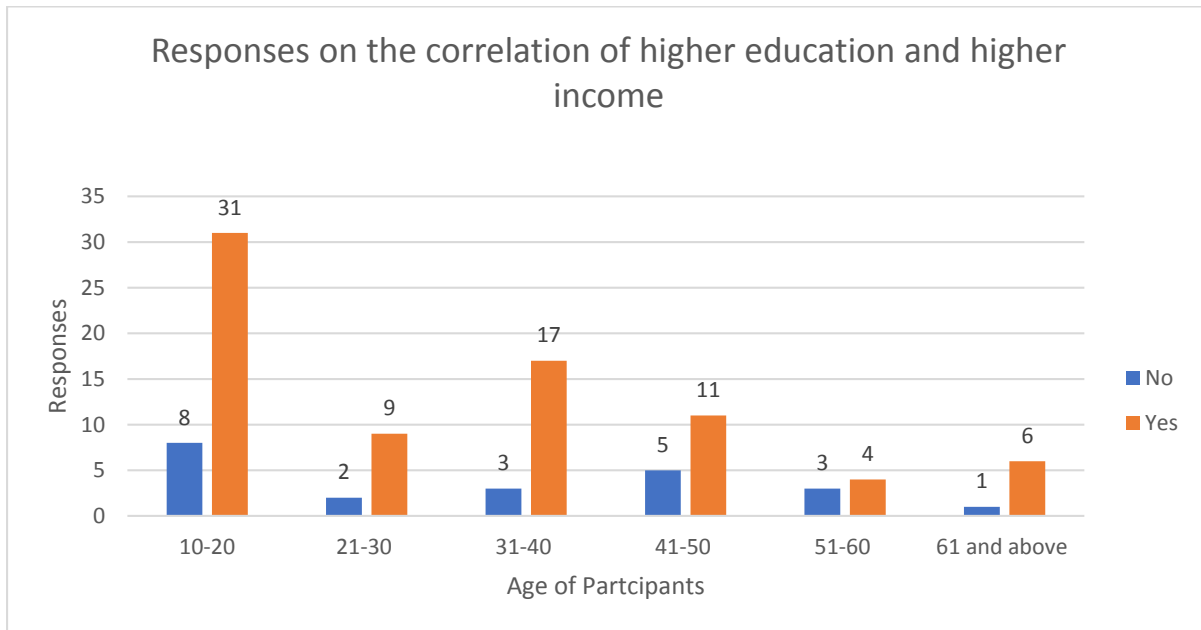


Fig. 3: Graph Depicting Response towards the Statement that Higher the Education, Higher the Income

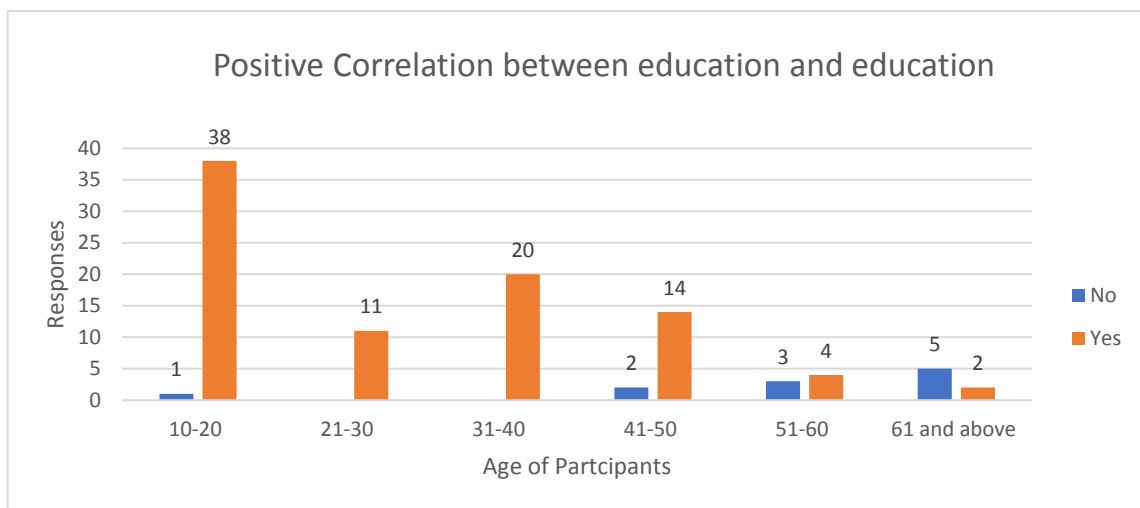


Fig. 4: Graph Depicting Responses on Correlation between Education and Happiness in Life

The age group of 10-20 years aspire more and believe that they have the ability to reach the pinnacle of success even if they come from low-income rural families (Supplementary material 15). But poverty poses a challenge to this expectation. Keeping the same in mind, most of the rural adults didn't support this belief among teenagers as they are farsighted and have more awareness about their lives and conditions. Individuals from the age group of 61 and above stated that only the student with some external financial support can work on his/her dream without any restraint. One of the questions in the survey asked whether education has

proved to be a solution to the issues of the people in villages. When examined, it was found that the villagers might have a positive outlook about education's impacts on the rural front, but they are not entirely convinced that the spread of education in rural regions will solve all the challenges. In the end, it has been recorded that the rural population is not satisfied with the government's efforts in the direction of local education and schooling (Fig. 5). Parents complain about the poor quality of government schooling and are often dissatisfied by the government inputs in rural education and schooling (Drèze & Kingdon, 2001).

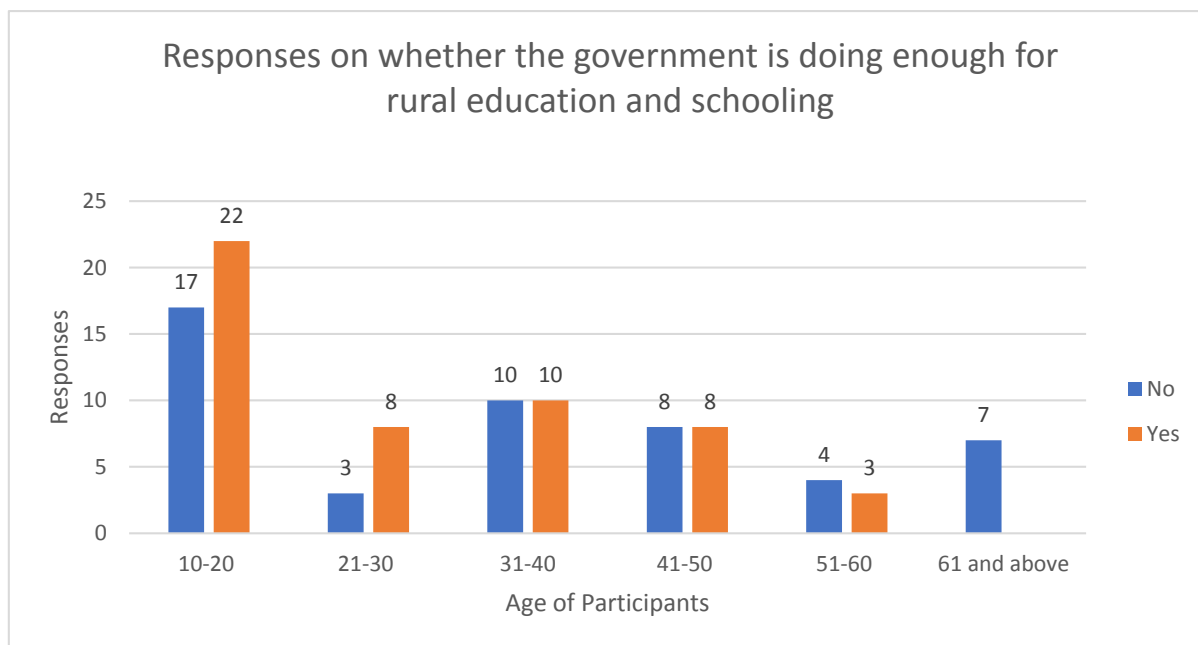


Fig. 5: Graph Showing Responses towards Government's Contribution to the Rural Education

Schooling in India depends on certain factors: School availability, Private schools, Parental motivation, child labour, and school quality (Drèze & Kingdon, 2001). Considering this statement, the result of this research reflected on each mentioned factor and the conclusions were drawn accordingly. A study states that education poverty (lack of education) and income poverty (inability to fulfil basic needs due to financial constraints) are correlated (Anand & Lea, 2011). Education poverty restrains us from gaining income which leads to income poverty, and Income poverty further deprives people of education (Anand & Lea, 2011). The cycle seems endless. This paper, as well, reflects the same. The income poverty among people in the village deprives the children of quality education. Their behaviour gets shaped accordingly and they start losing motivation, which makes them indifferent towards high-quality schooling and related facilities. The rural region of India is infamous for gender biases and discriminatory practices (Govindasamy, 2003). In a study, the differences between males and females are prevalent because of the dowry pressure, discrimination in the labour market, typical patriarchal social structure, and deeply rooted prejudices and gender bias notions (Rose, 2000). Even this study is indicating a similar outcome. The result derived from the questions related to gender discrimination proves the same and shows how girls are denied education and the opportunity to work out of their

homes. They are expected to be married at the minimum legal age, which is 18 years for females in India and to look after the household (Maertens, 2013). Girls are often not given the choice to decide their marriage lives. This tendency shows us a harsh reality about females' conditions in rural localities.

No doubt, education has become an inevitable part of our lives. Both, urban and rural India, requires a proper schooling environment and access to all the educational opportunities (Huggins & Thompson, 2019). Education has been seen as one of the main factors of development of the country. An attempt was also made to correlate education and happiness. It stated that education is not a direct indicator of happiness and has little relation with this aspect of life aspect, but it seems that both happiness and education are highly correlated with income. This provides a common base for relating happiness and education. Further, education may contribute to happiness as it brings in a good income, allows a better adaptation to the changing environment, and tends to raise people's aspirations (Ruiu & Ruiu, 2019). This finding can be correlated to the conclusion drawn from the collected data in this paper. According to a study on education, poverty, and development, it was found that poverty and higher education are inversely related in Asian countries (FitzRoy & Nolan, 2020). The gross enrolment ratio in

higher education and poverty has a negative relationship, which proves that basic education may help people out of poverty, higher education can sustain this development and upliftment (Tilak & Sudarshan, 2001). Since most of the poverty-stricken parts are often the rural regions, they must allow education in their lives so that they can reap the benefits of the quality education and sustain an improved lifestyle over time. Thus, Indian rural people should allow education in their lives so that they can reap the benefits of quality education and sustain an improved lifestyle over time. Eventually, this will create an environment of peace and knowledge, which will further ignite a more reasonable and humanistic behaviour in the locals of India (Tilak & Sudarshan, 2001).

From a psychological point of view, the behavioural patterns and attitudes of these people are reflecting their environment and widely accepted practices. It has been noted that the past experiences, the traditional values, patriarchal norms, religious beliefs, and stereotypes have a major role in guiding the behaviour, notions, and mentality of the rural Indians (Huggins & Thompson, 2019). A study on rural psychology states that a psychological assessment of rural development and human factors aids in providing a presumption, which is beneficial while planning, implementing, and evaluating any project or scheme for rural welfare (Singh, 2002). Similarly, the result of this research provides us a brief understanding of the rural perception on education and development, which are directly related to rural welfare. Thus, the outcomes and conclusions can prove to be of great worth if taken into account while formulating policies and further research for the welfare of Indian villages.

Conclusion

To put it all together, the research paper provides an insight into the lives of rural people in India using their behaviour and surroundings as an indicator of their perspective on education. The paper, with a special emphasis on education, discovers the schooling pattern and its quality, parental and children motivation for gaining knowledge, aspirations of rural people, and individual opinions about the spread of education and its impact on the rural front. It also highlights the gender bias in the villages which is prevalent in aspects from education to the labour market. The reactions towards schooling are a product of their surroundings and their

interactions with other people. Further, the agricultural backgrounds prevent children from attending schools on a regular basis as the children often help parents on fields during severe workloads. People are interested in investing in agricultural implements rather than in quality education. Moreover, poverty has made people believe that they should keep low expectations when it comes to university education and career building. The Indian rural welfare is solely dependent on the intricate policies made by the governments. If the policies are made by keeping in mind about the rural people's behavioural approaches, it will definitely bear sweeter fruits of development in the upcoming future. Also, it will help in changing the mind-set of rural population towards building a more liberal society.

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