

A Study on the Variations in Aspirations of Unemployed Rural Youth of Dakshin Khagrabari and Harinmara Villages of Northern West Bengal, India

Ratna Sarkar¹, Soumadri Sarkar²

¹(Assistant Professor, Department of Lifelong Learning & Extension, University of North Bengal)

²(Post Graduate Student, Department of Lifelong Learning & Extension, University of North Bengal)

Corresponding Author: Ratna Sarkar

ABSTRACT: India, the second-most populous country in the world, has 7.5% of its population in West Bengal. The country by itself and West Bengal being one of the states, is affected by problems like Urban-rural divide, inequality in income, high unemployment, lower per capita income and a low human resource development. Yet the greatest resource of India is her youth population. The present decade has seen a drastic decline in work-force involved in agriculture. Aspiration is one of the psychological factors that drive the youths' career decision. Ninety-four youth respondents from two villages of northern West Bengal, Dakshin Khagrabari from Khagrabari-1 Gram Panchayat of Jalpaiguri District and Harinmara from Gopalpoor Gram Panchayat of Coochbehar District, were interviewed to analyze their educational and occupational aspirations and the effect of socio-cultural and economic factors on aspirations. The core objective of this study was to investigate the variations in the aspirations of the youth of the two villages on the basis of the socio-economic condition of respondents in the backdrop of shifting discernments of rural youth with respect to exposure and advantages of being close to a location undergoing a rapid transformation from rural to an urban set-up. A significant variation between the aspirations of respondents of both villages was observed in the study. It was revealed that socio-cultural factors has influenced the educational and occupational aspirations of the respondents. Although a big fraction of youth, from both the villages, is more interested to choose a job in the government sector, a considerable number of rural youth were interested in agriculture. Since aspiration is one of the important factors that enable to pursue education and guide the preference for a particular occupation, the outcome of this study has to an extent broadened the perspectives of analyses towards drawing suitable extension strategies for the rural youth.

KEYWORDS: *Aspiration, Education, Location, Occupation, Rural Youth*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Youth, representing entire new generation (18- 35 yrs), constitutes the most important resource of any nation. As per 2011 census, out of 100 Indians, 35 are young people; nearly 25 youth are from rural India and 10 are urban youth. The type of youth India possesses shall be the important deciding factor for determining the country's prosperity and socio-economic development. [1]The most important intangible capital of youth is their enthusiasm required to generate prospects for national development. Hence, the development and exploitation of the capacities and energies of youth towards productive conduits have always held the concentration of the policy makers and planners of a country. Access to different facilities and institution are the prerogatives of the urban youth while deprivations of such accessibilities are predominant in the rural youth populations. The youth depicts different needs, aspiration, attitudes, habits and values of life. The aspiration of the rural youth, mostly burdened with the needs of their own families, have a profound impact on learning. Aspirations influence learning and guide students in making life choices [2].

The main objective of this study was to test the hypothesis that the diversity in the development of personality and values in the rural unemployed youth is largely molded by the nearness to the urban centre and the exposure of the youth to the occupational diversity in the urban set-up, which in turn drives the aspiration as per attainment of education. In order to fulfill this objective, we have selected two villages of northern West Bengal, having the similar cultural background, but the degree of connectivity with the nearest urban township was reverse in nature. The study was confined to youth populations of two villages of the districts, Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar, of West Bengal. However, the generalization made on the basis on the basis of findings of the study may not hold true for other parts of West Bengal or other states of India unless we have a fairly large database.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has attempted to analyze the differences in aspirations of the youth of the two villages on the basis of the socio-economic status of respondents in the background of changing perceptions of rural youth with respect to exposure and advantages of being nearer to a location undergoing a rapid transformation from rural to an urban set-up.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on the primary data. The primary data has been collected from two villages, Dakshin Khagrabari village from Khagrabari-1 Gram Panchayat of Jalpaiguri District and Harinmara village from Gopalpoor Gram Panchayat of Coochbehar District, through fieldwork. According to Census 2011 information, the location code or village code of Dakshin Khagrabari village and Harinmara village is 307594 and 308228 respectively. Dakshin Khagrabari village is located in Maynaguri Tehsil of Jalpaiguri district; Maynaguri being the nearest town (Maynaguri Railway Station is 3 km away from Dakshin Khagrabari village). Harinmara village is located in Cooch Behar II Tehsil of Koch Bihar district in West Bengal, India. It is situated 39.9 km away from sub-district headquarter Pundibari and 37.4 km away from district headquarter Cooch Behar. For data collection, 94 respondents (male rural, unemployed youth) were interviewed, 49 respondents from Dakshin Khagrabari and 45 respondents from Harinmara village.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Socio-economic background of the rural unemployed youth of the two villages

Socio-economic background of the respondents including their age, caste, occupation of their family earning member(s), gross monthly income of their family, and education status has been shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-economic Background of rural youth

| Age Group | Dakshin Khagrabari | Harinmara | Total no. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------|------------|
| 16-18 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 8.51 |
| 19-21 | 8 | 7 | 15 | 15.96 |
| 22-24 | 30 | 26 | 56 | 59.57 |
| 25-27 | 9 | 6 | 15 | 15.96 |
| Caste | | | | |
| Scheduled Caste | 30 | 22 | 52 | 55.32 |
| Scheduled Tribe | 5 | 17 | 22 | 23.40 |
| Other Backward Class | 10 | 8 | 20 | 21.28 |
| Family Occupation of the respondents | | | | |
| Service | 10 | 0 | 10 | 10.64 |
| Business | 10 | 0 | 10 | 10.64 |
| Agriculture | 29 | 45 | 74 | 78.72 |
| Monthly Income of Respondent's Family | | | | |
| 3000-7000 | 7 | 3 | 10 | 10.64 |
| 7001-11000 | 22 | 42 | 64 | 68.08 |
| 11001-15000 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 4.26 |
| 15001-19000 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 7.45 |
| Above 19000 | 9 | 0 | 9 | 9.57 |
| Educational Level | | | | |
| post graduate | 6 | 6 | 12 | 12.77 |
| graduate | 33 | 33 | 66 | 70.21 |
| higher secondary | 10 | 0 | 10 | 10.64 |
| secondary | 0 | 6 | 6 | 6.38 |

Source: Field Survey

Above table indicates that the predominant age-group of the respondents fell between 22-24 years. The scheduled caste constitutes 55.31 percent. The family occupation of the youth shows that nearly 78.72 percent of rural youth's families involve in agriculture sector, and 10.64 percent each engage in business and service sector. Therefore, it is observed that in rural areas most of the families are still connected with agriculture. The respondents act only as a helping hand in agriculture. The respondents are financially depended on family income. Majority of the respondents (70.21%) have completed graduation. 12.76 % have completed post graduation. Only 16.64 per cent of the respondents has studied up-to higher secondary level. On close examination of the data, there are marked differences between the two villages. None of the respondents from Harinmara hailed from a family where the monthly income was above Rs. 11,000/-. The picture of Dakshin Khagrabari was different; 40.8% of the respondents' monthly income of the families were above Rs.11,000/- and income of 18.4% of the respondents' family was above Rs. 19,000/-. Strikingly, the occupation of the

earning members of the family, to whom the respondents from Harinmara belonged to, was agriculture; while it was diverse in case of Dakshin Khagrabari where 40.8% of the respondents' family derived their income from service or business (Table 1). Representation of scheduled tribe amongst the respondents was significantly higher in Harinmara compared to that Dakshin Khagrabari.

B. Media diet of the respondents

Table 2: Media diet of the Respondents

| Mass Media Utilization | | Dakshin Khagrabari | Harinmara | Total no. of Respondents | Percentage |
|------------------------|------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------|------------|
| Radio Listening | Regular | nil | nil | nil | nil |
| | Occasional | 1 | nil | 1 | 1.06 |
| | Never | 48 | 45 | 93 | 98.94 |
| Newspaper Reading | Regular | 10 | 11 | 21 | 22.34 |
| | Occasional | 37 | 34 | 71 | 75.53 |
| | Never | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2.13 |
| Magazines Reading | Regular | nil | nil | nil | nil |
| | Occasional | 10 | nil | 10 | 10.64 |
| | Never | 39 | 45 | 84 | 89.36 |
| Television Watching | Regular | 49 | 45 | 94 | 100 |
| | Occasional | nil | nil | nil | nil |
| | Never | nil | nil | nil | nil |

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 shows that 100 percent respondents watch television regularly. They regularly watch various programmes which include news, sports, and other entertainment channels. None of them listened to radio broadcasting. 22 percent of the respondents read a newspaper regularly while the remaining 78 percent of the respondents are occasional newspaper readers. None of the respondents is a regular reader of a magazine; 20 percent of Dakshin Khagrabari respondents read magazines occasionally. 100 percent of the Harinmara respondents have never read any magazine. This observation was similar to that of the study conducted with the youth of Bengaluru where the habit of reading books and magazines is rare but watching movies is the most common free time activity [3]. The respondents on inquiry have expressed their disinterest to hear or view programmes related to agricultural activities either on radio or television.

C. Occupational Desire of the Respondents

The youth population sampled from two villages expressed similar desire to settle for a particular occupation. Irrespective of the villages, 73.40 percent of the rural youth aspired for a job in the Government sector while the remaining respondents preferred agriculture.

Table 3: Respondents' preference to opt for a particular occupation

| Prefer to Settle in Occupation | Dakshin Khagrabari | Harinmara | Total no. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------|------------|
| Jobs in Government sector | 35 | 34 | 69 | 73.40 |
| Agriculture | 11 | 14 | 25 | 26.60 |

Source: Field Survey

The data has given clear indications that rural youth is more interested to choose a govt. sector. The decrease in profit in agriculture has resulted in a change from agricultural occupation to non-agricultural job and migration from rural areas to cities. In another similar study, it was shown that the respondents who were willing to take farm-activities as their occupation has opined about the requirement of financial resources to gain more land as access to land was an issue amongst the groups of youth aspiring to apply modern technology in their farmland [4]. It was also observed that young people of small towns and cities in other states like Karnataka are in favour of the government jobs because of the security it offers than any other jobs [5].

D. Enterprising Desire of the Respondents

Table 4: Enterprising Desire of the Respondents

| | Dakshin Khagrabari | Harinmara | Total no. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------|------------|
| Want to learn new ways of farming | | | | |
| Yes | 22 | 45 | 67 | 71.28 |
| No | 27 | 0 | 27 | 28.72 |
| Computer Literacy | | | | |
| Yes | 27 | 6 | 33 | 35.11 |
| No | 22 | 39 | 61 | 64.89 |

Source: Field Survey

Table 4 depicts that 100% respondents of Harinmara Village are interested to learn new ways of farming because most of the villagers are engaged in agriculture, that's why the youth of Harinmara are interested to do it. It has been suggested by several authors that structural factors like socioeconomic background of the family have profound influence on attainment than are aspirations [6 and 7] Again, it is not a single variable but multiple variables including academic background of the parents, collective attitudes prevailing in the schools and community at large and intelligence interact in forming aspirations in youth [8]. At the present time, computer literacy is very essential for all the service sectors. In Harinmara, most of the youth (86.66 percent) have no computer certificate due to their financial problem as well as the problem of accessibility to institutes imparting such skills. On the contrary, almost 70% youth from Dakshin Khagrabari have computer certificate. It is interesting to note that Dakshin Khagrabari after having satisfied three predefined conditions of population size ($\geq 5,000$), population density (≥ 400 people/sq. km.) and non-farm workforce ($\geq 75\%$ of male workforce) is now considered as 'census town' (CT) but governed under Maynaguri community development block. As per 2011 Census of India, Maynaguri CD Block had a total population of 329,032 of which 291,073 were rural and 37,959 were urban. Mainaguri is a town in Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal, also known as the "Gate way of Dooars". New Maynaguri Railway Station is 3 km away from Dakshin Khagrabari village (now a CT). Five roads connect Maynaguri with several urban set-ups of northern West Bengal, namely Siliguri and Jalpaiguri in the west, Alipurduar and Coochbehar in the east, Changrabandha and Mathabhanga in the south, Malbazar and Lataguri in the north, and Ramsai in the north-west. Maynaguri having one each of degree college, government polytechnic college, industrial training institute (ITI) and B-ed college, provides a quality education to its surrounding students. Since Dakshin Khagrabari is adjacent to Maynaguri, more than 50% of respondents are computer literate. On the other hand, respondents from Harinmara village, situated 39.9 km away from sub-district headquarter Pundibari and 37.4 km away from district headquarter Cooch Behar, are mostly computer illiterate even though considerable fraction had higher education. Accessibility to institutes garnering computer skill located at Pundibari or Coochbehar is less in case of Harinmara village youth because of the distance factor. Shreds of evidence have suggested rural youth possess lower levels of academic and vocational aspirations than the youth in suburban and urban areas [9]

E. Educational Aspiration of the Rural Youth

Although the majority of the respondents (70.21%) have completed graduation and 12.76 % have completed post graduation, still they are not satisfied with the present education system. Table 5 indicates that most of the rural youth (more than 90 percent) are not happy.

Table 5: Opinion about Present Education System

| Education System | Dakshin Khagrabari | Harinmara | Total no. of Respondents | Percentage |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------|------------|
| Bad | 15 | 20 | 35 | 37.23 |
| Very Bad | 30 | 20 | 50 | 53.19 |
| Average | 4 | 5 | 9 | 9.57 |

Source: Field Survey

Such opinion of the youth may not be the same in other states. For example, in a study conducted with the youth in the state of Karnataka, the views on the educational system in the state was strikingly opposite to that of the present study although majority of them have had access to government-aided schools. 75 percent of the respondents were happy with their school/college experience; the reason for which was more of an acknowledgement of the opportunity to learn and was not the reflection of the quality and quanta of access to the education system [10].

F. Aspiration about the Resettlement of the Rural Youth

In the villages earning opportunities in secondary and tertiary sector are lower compared to urban area. Therefore, migration from rural to urban area has become a common phenomenon. In this study it is observed that the rural youth do not want to resettle in other places rather they prefer to stay in their own village. Table 6 reveals their opinion/solution to check the migration from rural to urban area. In spite of the influence of globalization, young people prefer to remain within the state rather than venturing out to other parts of the country and beyond.

Table 6: Opinion about the checking of migration

| Opinion about the checking of migration through | Dakshin Khagrabari | Harinmara | Total no. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------|------------|
| Creation of more job opportunities in rural area | 38 | 20 | 58 | 61.70 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|----|----|-------|
| Infrastructural Development of rural area | 2 | 20 | 22 | 23.40 |
| Increase in agricultural wage | 5 | 9 | 14 | 14.90 |

Source: Field Survey

G. The aspiration to Change the Present Lifestyle of the Rural Youth

The aspiration to change the present lifestyle is 100 percent consensus among the sample population of two villages. The major reason behind the consensus is the exposure via television. The most common free time activity of young people was watching movies and going out with friends. Young people were very enthusiastic to dress up in the most modern style. This was more a manifestation of an aspiration and not necessarily something they were able to practice. While it was clearly an urban phenomenon, the rural youth too were increasingly influenced by the same.

V. CONCLUSION

The study has found that aspirations of the rural youth of northern part of West Bengal varied according to the location of the village rather proximity of the village to an urban area. Nearness to an urban locality having centers of learning and enhancement of professional skills influenced the aspirations of youth from Dakshin Khagrabari. The youth of the remote village, Harinmara, although a considerable fraction being graduates, aspired for agriculture as occupation. Hence there is an urgent need to study the factors in detail in order to design up-to-date extension strategies to induce youth in pursuing agriculture with modern technology.

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