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SPATIAL DICHOTOMY OF LITERACY IN RELATION WITH SOCIO-ECONOMIC ATTRIBUTE: A CASE STUDY OF HOOGHLY DISTRICT

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Abstract:

Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next. Literacy being a part of education is the key to socio-economic progress as well as human resource development. The present work aimed at assessing the spatial variation in terms of literacy and their related problems among the blocks of Hooghly District. The study reveals that the area with higher socio-economic prospect showing higher literacy rate and are ignorant to educational attributes related with selected parameters among various pockets of the district.

KEY WORDS:

Literacy, Human Resource Development, Socio-Economic Progress.

INTRODUCTION

The primary sense of literacy still represents the lifelong intellectual process of gaining meaning from a critical interpretation of the written or printed text. Peoples' access to education depends crucially on the educational infrastructure in place (HDI Report of Hooghly District, 2010). The prime objectives of human development approach broadly advocates for widening up of people's choice and attainment of a decent standard of living. Amongst the three essential choices of human life education is the most important parameter of HDI, has been taken into consideration to draw a relation with other socio-economic factors in the process of development.

OBJECTIVES

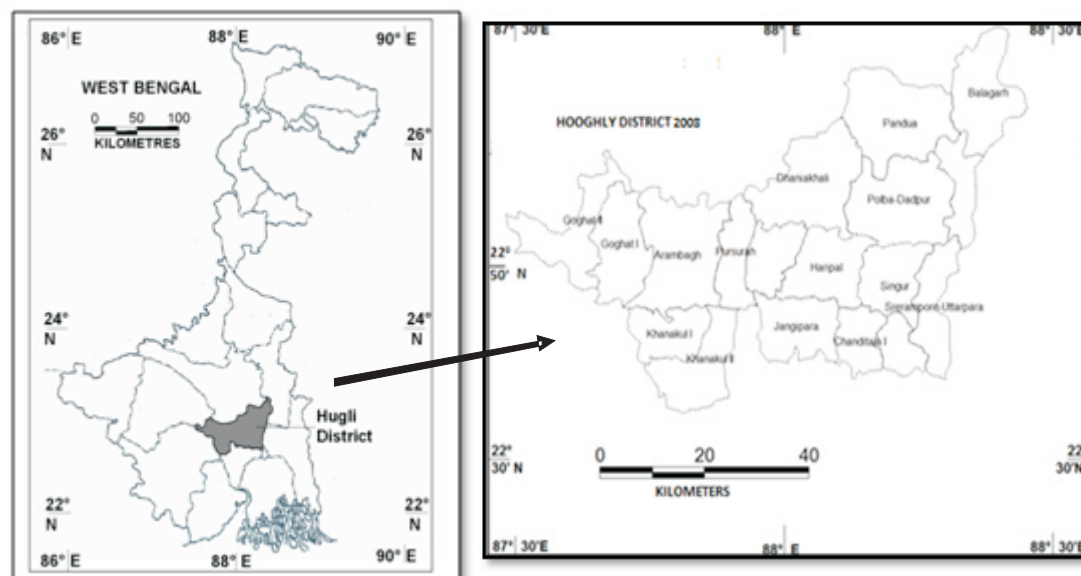
The paper is an attempt to analyse-

- (i) The block level variation in literacy in Hooghly District;
- (ii) To show the spatial dichotomy of socio-economic attribute to see whether literacy is getting influenced by the socio-economic factors or not.
- (iii) To provide some alternatives for future days.

STUDY AREA

Geographical location of the district is between 23° 01' 20" N to 22° 39' 32" N latitude and 88° 30' 15" E to 87° 39' 32" E longitude. Hooghly district is surrounded by the district of Bankura and Burdwan in the North, Nadia and 24-Parganas in the East, Howrah in the South and Location Map of Hooghly District

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Location Map of Hooghly District

Paschim Medinipur district in the West. Hooghly District is bounded on the north by Burdwan district; on the east by the Hooghly River, on the south and west by the Rupnarayan River. The district has high prospect of education and culturally and economically endowed with strong base of education. There are 2456 primary schools, 432 middle schools, 251 secondary school and 72 higher secondary school among various pockets of the district (2001). The literacy rate of Hooghly is 75.11% which is higher in comparison to the country (64.8%) and to the state, West Bengal (68.64%).

METHODOLOGY

The basic feature of this paper is to provide a comprehensive of human development in terms of education as a prime parameter at the different blocks of Hooghly District in different modes of presentation. It gives analytical explanation in variation of literacy depending upon 14 independent variables have been selected under two groups; (i) different educational facilities in block level having nine 9 variables and (ii) relation have been drawn to 5 socio-economic variables, which has been standardized by Z-Score values of each variables were aggregated to find out the Composite Z-Score for each block.

Formula:

(i) $Z\text{-Score} = \frac{(x - \bar{x})}{s}$

Where, x = Item, \bar{x} = Mean, s = Standard Deviation

(ii) $\text{Composite Z-Score} = \frac{\sum Z\text{-Score}}{n}$ Where, \sum = Sum of Z-Score of each indicator

(iii) Gender Gap in Literacy = (% of Male Literate - % of Female Literate)

To fulfil the objectives of my study the data have been obtained from District Census Report (2001), District Statistical Handbook (2006-2007), Human Development Report of Hooghly District 2010. The maps have been drawn by Map Info Professional 7 and the diagramme by using Microsoft Excel 2007.

Block	Primary School	Middle School	Secondary & Higher Secondary School
Goghat-I	0.82	0.17	0.08
Goghat-II	0.84	0.15	0.07
Arambagh	0.72	0.13	0.11
Purusura	0.67	0.1	0.1
Tarakeswar	0.67	0.09	0.08
Dhaniakhali	0.69	0.19	0.09
Pandua	0.62	0.13	0.13
Balagarh	0.78	0.1	0.1
Chinsura-Magra	0.24	0.05	0.03
Polba-Dadpur	0.81	0.13	0.09
Haripal	0.71	0.09	0.08
Singure	0.9	0.09	0.12
Serampore-Uttarpara	0.23	0.03	0.03
Chanditala-I	0.48	0.09	0.08
Chanditala-II	0.3	0.06	0.03
Jangipara	0.66	0.11	0.08
Khanakul-I	0.82	0.16	0.07
Khanakul-II	0.9	0.11	0.11

Source: Calculated from District Census Report, Village Directory, Hooghly, 2001

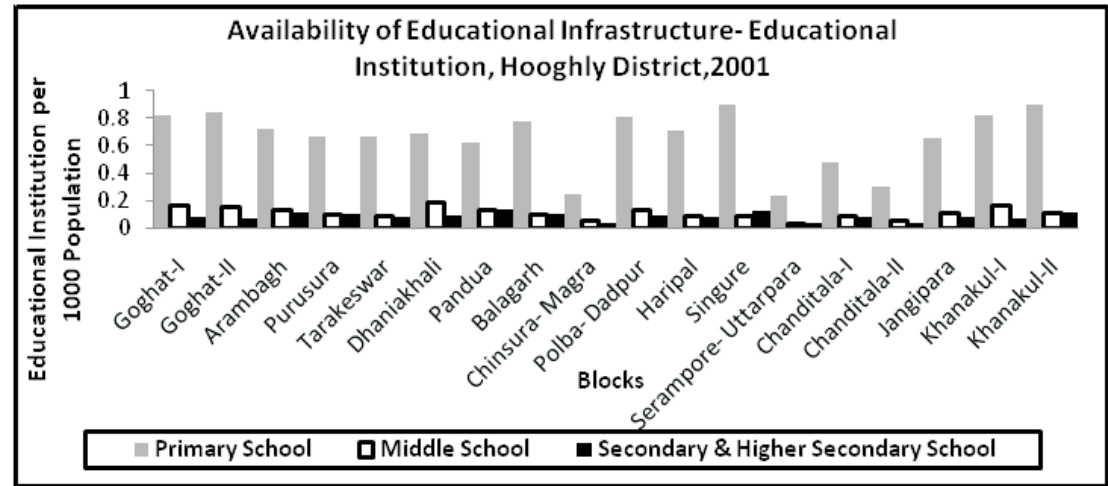
DISCUSSION

Table-1: Availability of Educational infrastructure- Educational Institution per 1000 Population, Hooghly District

The district of Hooghly comprising of 6.28% of the total state population with 4 sub-divisions, namely-(i) Chandernagore (ii) Chinsura-Magra (iii) Serampur-uttarpara (iv) Arambag covering the area 3149 km², where the density of population is 1601/km².

Apart from the availability, accessibility is also an important parameter. While urban centres contain educational institution within their periphery, rural areas often deprived from this and substantial number of children drops out from the learning process because of the distance of school and colleges.

We have therefore needed to focus on the distance of educational institutions from the



Source: Calculated from District Census Report, Village Directory, Hooghly, 2001

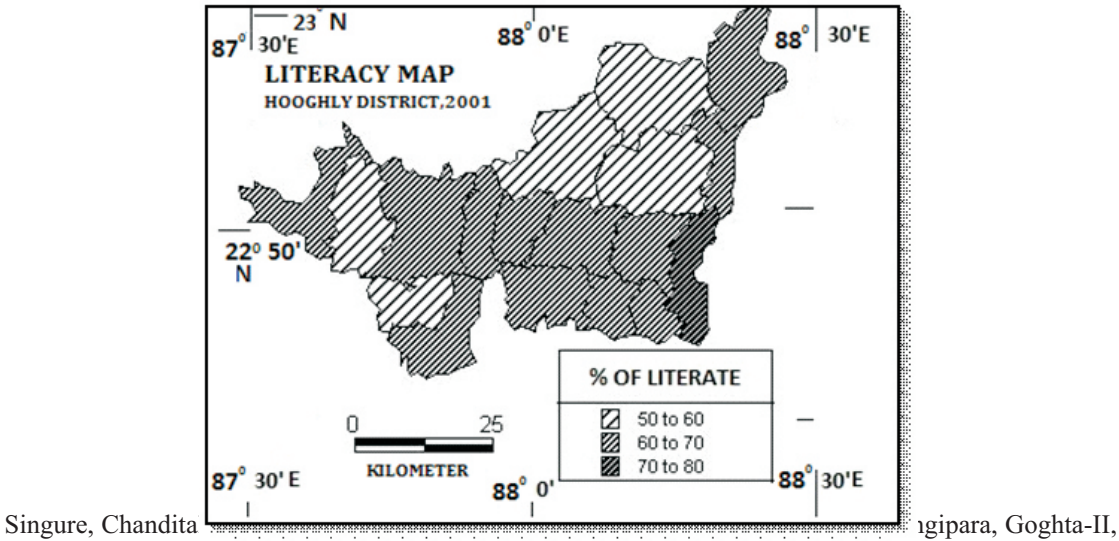
villages. It is observed that about 89 per cent of the villages have Primary Schools within the villages, 9 per cent have within 1 km, while only 0.33 per cent have it beyond 1 km. In the context of middle schools, about 42.55 percent of villages have them within the periphery of the village, about 35 per cent have within 1 km range, and 22 per cent have it beyond 1 km.

Table-2: Accessibility and Availability of Educational Facilities in Rural Areas, 2001

Indicator	Within Village	With 1 km.	Beyond 1km
Distance of nearest primary school	89	9	0.33
Distance of nearest middle school	42.5	34.9	22.60

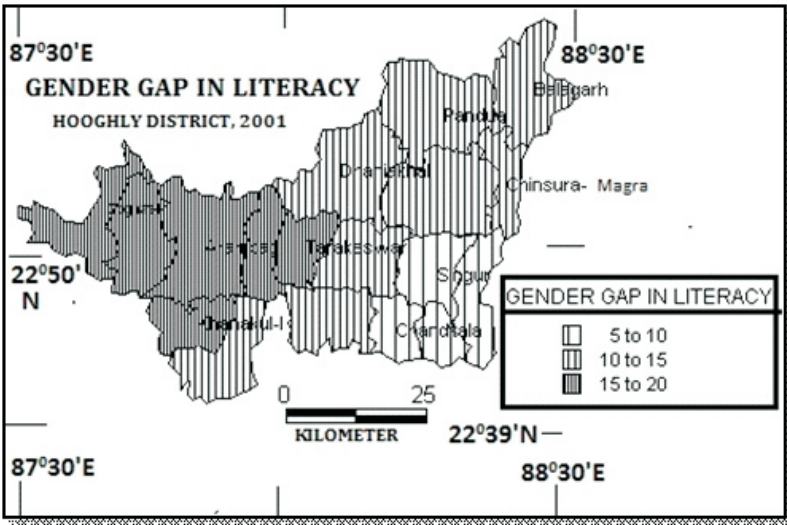
Source: Census of India 2001, Village & town Directories

There has been significant development of literacy in India as whole, from 5.3% in 1901 to 65.4% in 2001. The situation in Hooghly District is better than both the country and the state average; which is 75.11% (projected from census 2001). Block wise best performer in terms of literacy are- Serampore-Uttarpara, Chinsura–Magra



Balagarh, Arambagh. Though the distict has performed much better in case of gender gap in literacy as well, with overall male and female literacy rates being 82.59% and 67.21%, the gender gap being 15.38 for the district, which is less than national (21.68) and state level.

Looking at different blocks it has been noticed that the gender gap in literacy is lower in those district basically having comparatively higher literacy rate, like- Serampore-

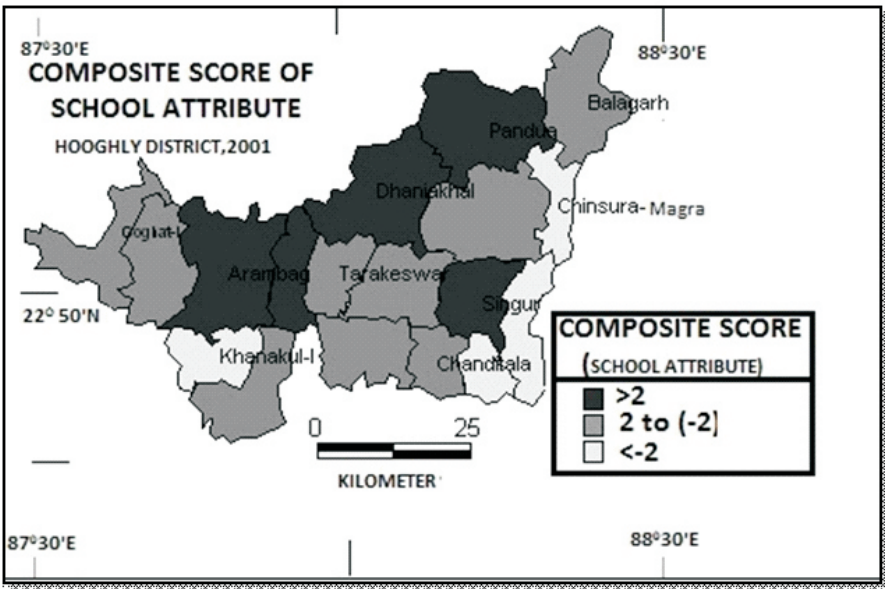


Uttarpara, Chinsura –Magra, Singure, Chanditala I & II and is scoring high in the blocks which have done worst in literacy and significantly bad in gender gap by scoring high. Thus the blocks like – Arambag, Polba- Dadpur and Tarakeswar that had fared badly in both fronts, needs spatial attention from the governing body.

Based on the above discussion on the literacy related infrastructure and achievement of the district in terms of education different related variables were taken which has been standardised by Z-Score to calculate the Composite Score of its response on the relevant field. That helps us to make a well directed inspection of the blocks in a better position and the ones performing poorly and hence need spatial attentions to frame well directed policies aimed at reducing the inadequacies related to literacy in the relevant sub-regions.

Table- 3: Composite Score Index on School Attribute

Category	Composite Score	Block Name
High	>2	Arambagh, Purusura, Dhaniakhali, Pandua, Singure
Moderate	2 to (2)	Goghat-I,Goghat-II,Tarakeswar,Balagarh,Polba-Dadpur,Chanditala-I,Jangipara,Haripal, Khanakul-II
Low	< 2	Chinsura-Magra, Serampore-Uttarpara, Chanditala-II, Khanakul-I



Source: Calculated from District Census Report, Hooghly, 2001

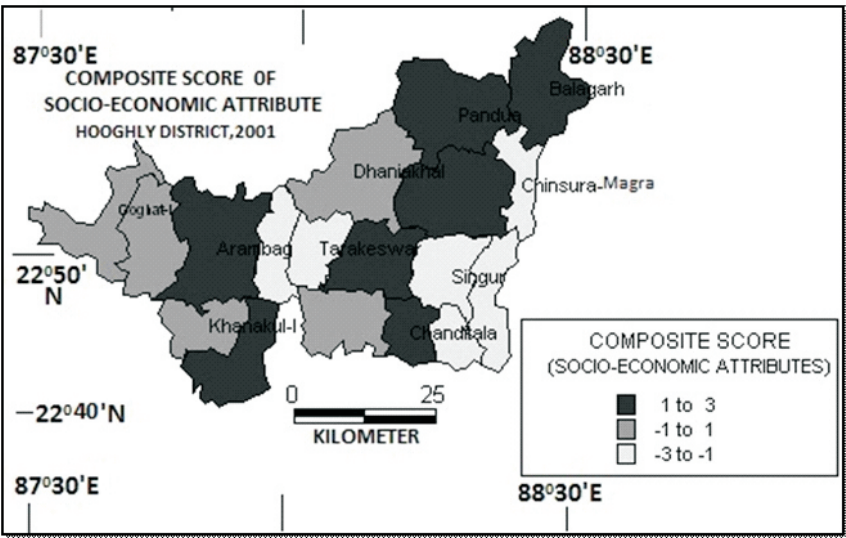
9 schools related were taken for Composite Standard Score analysis to reveal the spatial variation within blocks, namely total no. of (i) inhabited village (ii) primary (iii) middle (iv) secondary & higher secondary schools (v) colleges (vi) adult literacy centres within each block accompanied with total no. of villages having no (vii) school (viii) no middle school (ix) villages having no educational facilities within their periphery.

Three zones were identified- High (>2), Moderate (2 to -2), Low (< -2). Most of the blocks but a few show unhealthy trends so far the related school attributes are concern, like- Chinsura-Magra, Serampore-Uttarpara, Chanditala-II, Khanakul-I where as Arambagh, Purusura, Dhaniakhali, Pandua, Singure scoring high in this respect. The situation is quite astonishing over here as most of the blocks where literacy rate is high showing negative trend in score .It is because these blocks are mostly having urban areas and in maximum case they are having the school facilities within their periphery serving maximum no. of population as far as possible instead of having less no. of educational institution in comparison with the remaining blocks (regarding Table -1). Here the accessibility played a vital role as in blocks like Arambagh, Purusura, Goghat I & II. Though the no. of institution is quite satisfying but the accessibility is not at all convincing for educational achievement. The areas are mostly prone to rural areas along with common scenario of deprivation and lacuna.

To compare this situation more specifically to show the spatial dichotomy, a relation has been drawn with the Composite Standardised Score of socio-economic attribute to see whether literacy is getting influenced by the socio-economic factors or not. For this 4 socio-economic attributes were selected, namely- (i) % of marginal workers (ii) % of non-workers (iii) gender gap in literacy (iv) % of illiterates. Here it is clear from the above selection that if these factors response well by scoring high that means they are affecting the whole educational system adversely.

Table -4: Composite Score Index on Socio-Economic Attribute

Category	Composite Score	Block Name
High	1 to 3	Arambagh, Pandua, Balagarh, Polba-Dadpur, Haripal, Chanditala-I, Khanakul-II
Moderate	1 to 1	Goghat-I & II, Dhaniakhali, Jangipara, Khanakul-I
Low	3 to ?1	Chinsura-Magra, Serampore-Uttarpara, Purusura, Tarakeswar, Singure, Chanditala-II



Source: Calculated from District Census Report, Hooghly, 2001

It is very much evident from the map that the negative factors of socio-economic aspect have less impact (Composite Score value is lower) in those areas where literacy rate is higher 60% and gender gap is lower, ranging between 5 to 10, like- Chinsura-Magra, Serampore-Uttarpara, Purusura, Tarakeswar, Singure, Chanditala-II. As the response of the selected parameters were negatively correlated in response to the social welfare, it can be said that literacy is directly proportional to the development of a society and it can be achieved not only by increasing the literacy rate but also by reducing the inadequacy from the society in both area of education and social wellbeing parameters.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is clear that the socio-economic condition of the district is having a direct response on literacy. As blocks like -Chinsura-Magra, Serampore-Uttarpara, Purusura, Tarakeswar and Singure, do not possess good school attribute but they have high literacy rate in comparison to Arambagh, Pandua, Balagarh, Polba-Dadpur, Haripal, Chanditala-I and Khanakul-II, which instead of having good school attribute posing lower literacy rate because of higher gender gap in literacy and the direct adverse impact of the above selected socio-economic attributes on the whole educational system. As literacy is not the simple reading of words or a set of associated symbols and sounds but an act of critical understanding of the situation of the world. It could be concluded that accessibility in respect to educational infrastructure in the rural areas of the selected sub-regions should be increased so that the drop out rate can be reduced. With this the government should enhance other facilities like, sanitation, cleanliness, accompanied with better expenditure management within school premises. Apart from these the gender gap in literacy should be decreased by taking affective measures on women literacy to a justified level compatible with the male. The gap in literacy rates for men and women are virtually the same for Chinsura-Magra, Serampore-Uttarpara, Purusura and Singure, but Arambagh, Pandua, Balagarh, Polba-Dadpur, Khanakul-II and Jangipara needs special attention from the government for the betterment on the regarding ground.

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