

Socio-Economic Status of Students with Special Needs in Champhai District with Reference to Their Disability

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Abstract

Socio-economic status means the financial condition and social recognition of an individual or a family. The present study tries to find out whether the socio-economic status of students with special needs (SWSN) in Champhai District, Mizoram has any impact on their academic achievement and disability. For this purpose, the researchers selected 63 students with special needs, having different kind of disabilities such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, intellectual disability and physical disability. Samples were selected using simple random sampling method for this study. The study found that the largest percentage of students with special needs belonged to low socio-economic status family and they were intellectually disabled. Academic achievement of the majority of them was at the primary level. No significant relationship was found between socio-economic status and academic achievement of students with special needs. Further, no significant difference was found between the academic achievements of students with special needs in relation to their gender.

Keywords: *Socio-economic status, Students with special needs, Disability, Champhai District.*

Introduction

Socio-economic status (SES) includes the occupational status of individual or parent, area of residence, monthly income, and type of housing, condition of house, house ownership or rental status, level of living and formal social participation. Socio-economic status is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work, experience and of an individual or family's economical and social position relative to others. Socio-economic status is typically broken into three categories high SES, average SES and low SES. To describe the three areas, a family or an individual may fall into one of these categories. Any or all of the three variables (income, education and occupation) can be assessed.

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The sensitivity towards disability changes with the time and demographics. Different people view disability differently which is based on the socio-economic position, education, and culture. In Africa, the disability is viewed as a spiritual curse despite medical explanations proffered. For the West, disability is a natural phenomenon, explained by medical theories.

Poor socio-economic characteristics can lead people with disabilities to social isolation, which in turn is presented as a contributing factor to the lack of health promotion, limited access to services and unequal treatment, identified by the difficulty in scheduling appointments, barriers in accessing information and failure in communication. Thus, the need for promoting the health of people with disabilities is unquestionable, and should be treated as a priority both in political level and in supporting health services. Over recent decades, people's movement together with health sciences recognized and redefined the role of the physical and social barricade in disability. Generally, economic condition and social status of the disabled person also acts as a key role in enabling his/her further studies.

Need and importance of the study

It is estimated that more than a billion people worldwide have some type of disability, and about 20% live in poor socio-economic conditions. The impact caused by disabilities on our social and economical behaviour play an important role in overall growth of country. Disabled people, who are suffering from lack of jobs, are dependent on their family member, this condition causes depression in their lives, but if that disable man/women get a job in any sector, it will be helpful for his family and country's growth as well. Similarly, providing education to all, especially the disabled students must be the primary goal of any country for the social and economical betterment. Thus, the study tries to understand whether the socio-economic status of the students with special needs have any impact on their academic achievement.

Review of related literature

Some of the related literatures for the present study are listed below –

According to Mirowsky and Nongzhuang Hu (1996), in the USA the effect of income on physical impairment steepens below the 20th percentile of household income, with over half this effect concentrated between the lowest and the sixth percentile. Increases in household income have little impact on the prevalence of physical impairment above the 20th percentile.

Newacheck (1998) carried out a study in the USA and established a relationship between poverty and childhood disability prevalence. It was drawn from a crosssectional descriptive analysis performed on data from 513 children younger than 18 years of age who were included in the 1992-94 (USA) National Health Interview Survey. Its findings were that:

- (i) The prevalence of disability is higher among those who are living below the poverty line (9.62 per cent for poor children compared with 5.73 per cent for non-poor children).

- (ii) A multivariate analysis of various factors showed that age, sex, family income and family structure exerted an independent effect on the probability of disability. In Australia, the Henderson Inquiry (Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, 1977) established a link between poverty and disability prevalence. The prevalence of poverty among people with a disability varied from country to country according to economic system and the amount of costs that fall on people with a disability and their families; loss of income was the primary source of poverty for people with a disability acquired after reaching working age; for those with congenital or childhood disabilities, the main source of poverty was the prospect of relying on a pension or low income from work.

Steinmetz (2006) concludes that disparities in education have been ongoing for generations. In a large study of individuals 65 years and older, 20.9 percent of those without a disability failed to complete high school, compared to 25.1 percent and 38.6 percent of individuals with a non-severe or severe disability, respectively, who failed to complete high school.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), about 15.1 percent of the population age 25 and over with a disability have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, while 33 percent of individuals in the same age category with no disability have attained the same educational status.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are –

- (i) To find out the socio-economic status of students with special needs according to their disability
- (ii) To study socio-economic status in relations to the academic achievement of students with special needs.
- (iii) To compare the academic achievement of students with special needs in relations to their gender.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the study are –

- (i) There is a significant relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement of students with special needs.
- (ii) There is a significant relationship between the academic achievements of students with special needs in relation to their gender.

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses have been framed for the present study:

- (i) There is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement of students with special needs.
- (ii) There is no significant relationship between the academic achievements of students with special needs in relation to their gender.

Methodology and Procedure

Method of the Study

The present study employed descriptive survey method

Population and Sample

The population for the present study comprises of students with special needs in Champhai District.

Sample

The investigators selected 63 (sixty-three) students with special needs in Champhai District using stratified proportionate random sampling method.

Tools Used

The investigators used the “Socio-economic Status Scale (SES)” developed by Singh, Shyam & Kumar (2007).

Procedure of Data Analysis

The investigators personally visited the homes of the selected sample and collected the necessary data. For analyzing data, statistical technique such as Mean, Standard Deviation and ‘t’ test were employed to find accurate results and lastly, descriptive interpretations were made to draw conclusions.

Analysis and interpretation of the study

Table 1: Raw Score value of socio-economic status scale with interpretation

Sl No	Raw Score	Interpretation
1	41 and below	Low socio-economic status
2	42-56	Lower middle socio-economic status
3	57-76	Average middle socio-economic status
4	77-100	Upper middle socio-economic status
5	101 and above	High socio-economic status

As found in Table 1, the raw score value of socio-economic status scale with their interpretation is given. Score of 41 and below is interpreted as low socio-economic status, score between 42 to 56 is interpreted as lower middle socio-economic status, score between 57 and 76 is interpreted as average middle socio-economic status, score between 77 to 100 is interpreted as upper middle socio-economic status and lastly, score from 101 and above is interpreted as high socio-economic status.

Table 2: Overall socio-economic status of students with special needs in Champhai District

No of SWSN		Low SES		Lower Middle SES		Average Middle SES		Upper Middle SES		High SES	
Total	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
63	100	36	57.14	18	28.57	5	8%	4	6.35	0	0

Table 2 shows the overall socio-economic status of students with special needs in Champhai District, Mizoram. As found in this table, the total number of students with special needs in Champhai District is 63. Out of this, 57.14% are in the low SES, 28.57% falls in the lower middle SES, while 6.35% are in the upper middle SES. There is no student with special needs who comes from high SES.

Table 3: Students with special needs according to their socio-economic status and type of disability

SES	Disability							
	Hearing Impairment		Visual Impairment		Intellectually Disabled		Physically Disabled	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Low	7	53.8	5	50	16	57.1	8	66.6
Lower Middle	5	38.5	3	30	8	28.6	2	16.6
Average Middle	1	7.7	2	20	2	7.14	0	
Upper Middle	1	7.7	0		2	7.14	1	8.33
High	0		0		0		0	

As seen in table 3, students with special needs are categorised in accordance to their socio-economic status and their disability. Out of the total sample i.e., 63 students with special needs, 22.2% are having hearing impairment, 15.87% have visual impairment, 44.4% are intellectually disabled while 17.5% are with physical disability. From students with special needs having hearing impairment, 11.1% falls in low SES, 7.94 % are from lower middle SES and 1.59% falls in upper middle SES, there are no students with special needs in high SES. Among students having visual impairment, 7.94% are in low SES, 4.76% falls in lower middle SES while 3.17% are in average middle, no students with special needs are from upper middle and high SES. From physically disabled students, there are 25.39% in low SES, 12.69% falls in lower middle SES while 3.17% are from upper middle SES, no

students with special needs are from high SES. From intellectually disabled students, 12.69% comes from low SES, while 1.59% falls in the upper middle SES, no students with special needs comes from average middle and high SES among the intellectually disabled. Thus, it can be interpreted that majority i.e., 44.4% of students with special needs have physical disability while only 15.87% have visual impairment.

Table 4: Overall level of academic achievement of the students with special needs

Sl No.	Level	Number of SWSN	Percentage
1	Primary	47	74.60%
2	Upper Primary	12	19.04%
3	High School	3	4.76%
4	Higher Secondary	1	1.59%

As per table 4, the overall academic achievement level of the sample is given. As seen from the above table, 74.6% of the students with special needs are from primary level, 19.04% are from upper primary level, 4.76% are from high school level while 1.59% comes from higher secondary level. Thus, it can be interpreted that majority of students with special needs i.e., 74.6% are found in primary level while only 1.59% is found in higher secondary level.

Table 5: Comparison of SES and academic achievement of students with special needs

Level	Number of SWSN	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Level of Significance
Primary	47	9	12.25	2.45	Not Significant at 0.01 level
Upper Primary	12	4.5	5.92		
High School	3	1.25	1.89		
Higher Secondary	1	1	1.41		

Comparative analysis from table 5 shows that the mean value and standard deviation are calculated and 't-test' is performed between socio-economic status and the academic achievement of students with special needs in Champhai District. The t-value when calculated is found to be 2.45. The calculated value of 't' is much lesser than the critical values 3.49 and 5.95 at 0.01 level and 0.05 levels of significance. Hence, it is not significant and, consequently the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement of students with special needs is accepted.

Table 6: Comparison of academic achievement of students with special needs in relation to their gender

Gender	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	Level of Significance
Male	19	8.25	13.37	2.57	Not Significant at 0.01 Level
Female	28	7.5	8.06		

From table 6, we can find that the t-value is found to be 2.57. According to the calculated degrees of freedom (df), which is 5, the critical value of 't' at 0.01 level is 4.03, which is more than the calculated value of 't'. This further signifies that there is no significant difference between the academic achievements of students with special needs in relation to their gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between the academic achievements of students with special needs in relations to their gender is accepted.

Major findings

- 1) The largest percentage of students with special needs in Champhai district, Mizoram i.e. 57.14 per cent belonged to low socio-economic status family whereas 28.57 per cent were in the lower middle socio-economic status and another 6.35 per cent were in the upper middle socio-economic status groups. There was not even a single student with special needs who came from high SES.
- 2) Out of the students with special needs in Champhai district, 44.4 per cent were intellectually disabled, 22.2 per cent were with hearing impairment, 15.87 per cent had visual impairment and 17.5 per cent were with physical disability.
- 3) From students with special needs having hearing impairment, 11.1 per cent belonged to low socio-economic status (SES) groups, 7.94 per cent were from lower middle SES group and 1.59 per cent were from upper middle SES family. No student with hearing impairment belonged to high SES group.
- 4) Among students having visual impairment, 7.94 per cent were in low SES, 4.76 per cent were from lower middle SES family while 3.17 per cent were in average middle SES group. No student with visual impairment belonged to upper middle and high SES group.
- 5) From physically disabled students, there were 25.39 per cent who were in low SES group. Another 12.69 per cent belonged to lower middle SES while 3.17 per cent were from upper middle SES families. There was no physically disabled student who came from high SES family.
- 6) From intellectually disabled students, 12.69 per cent came from low SES, 1.59 per cent from upper middle SES and no student from average middle and high SES groups.
- 7) Majority (74.6%) of the students with special needs were from primary level, 19.04 per cent were from upper primary level, 4.76 per cent were from high school level while only 1.59 per cent came from higher secondary level.

- 8) No significant relationship was found between socio-economic status and academic achievement of students with special needs. Thus, the null hypothesis stating that *“There was no significant relationship between socio-economic status and academic achievement of students with special needs”* is accepted.
- 9) No significant difference was found between the academic achievements of students with special needs in relation to their gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that *“There was no significant difference between the academic achievements of students with special needs in relations to their gender”* is accepted.

Discussions

All over the world, women represent three quarters of people with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries. Most of the total population with disabilities is made up of women, which can be related to the fact that male mortality is higher than female in the country. Among the deficiencies, hearing is more prevalent in females while the motor affects most male.

Through the results, most students (57.14%) with special needs fall under the category of low socio-economic status, 28.57 per cent fall with lower middle socio-economic status and 7.94 and 6.35 per cent were in the category of average middle and upper middle socio-economic status respectively.

In regards to gender, 52.38 per cent of the students with disability were male while 47.62 per cent were female students. However, the predominant gender in education was found to be female students as they had higher level of educational attainment.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of analysing and understanding the socio-economic status of students with special needs. The above findings clearly indicate that the socio-economic status of students with special needs does not pose a significant threat to the academic achievement of the students with special needs. However, the investigators have found that majority of the parents faced challenges in regards to the care and education of their disabled children. Majority of the parents were having economic crisis and a smaller but significant number of parents also felt the stigmatization of their disabled children inside the school and community. Therefore, more awareness programs and initiatives are needed with regards to the acceptance and support of differently-abled children.

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