

Exploring the Proximity to Educational Resources on Student Learning of District Poonch

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Abstract

The study delves into the impact of educational resource proximity on student learning within District Poonch. Data collection involved the selection of five schools from various zones, utilizing both primary and secondary sources. Employing a self-constructed information blank, insights were garnered regarding access, enrollment, and retention of Gujjar and Bakerwal elementary school students. Findings reveal that a significant portion of schools are located within close proximity to students' residences, with the majority of students commuting by foot. Despite the presence of basic amenities like toilets in most schools, deficiencies in facilities such as playgrounds and computer labs persist. Moreover, the absence of separate toilet facilities for girls in a notable fraction of schools warrants attention, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to enhance educational infrastructure and equity within the district.

Keywords: educational resources, student learning, district poonch

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I. Introduction

In the realm of educational discourse, the geographical proximity of students to educational resources plays a pivotal role in shaping their learning outcomes and academic achievements. Understanding the nexus between student learning and the proximity to educational resources necessitates a multifaceted exploration. This exploration embarks not only on the geographical distance from students' habitation to educational institutions but also delves into the quality and availability of resources encompassing infrastructure, teaching faculty, and learning materials. By examining these factors through a nuanced lens, we aim to unravel the intricate interplay between spatial dynamics and educational outcomes in District Poonch.

Within the scholarly landscape, numerous studies have underscored the significance of proximity to educational resources in shaping student learning experiences. Research by [cite author/year] emphasized that reduced distance to schools positively correlates with higher attendance rates and academic performance, thereby highlighting the pivotal role of geographical accessibility in fostering educational equity.

Against this backdrop, this study endeavors to contribute to the existing discourse by delving into the unique context of District Poonch. By amalgamating quantitative analyses with qualitative insights garnered through interviews and surveys, we seek to delineate the nuanced nuances underpinning the relationship between proximity to educational resources and student learning outcomes in this region. Furthermore, our inquiry extends beyond mere statistical correlations, aiming to encapsulate the lived experiences of students, educators, and stakeholders to provide a comprehensive understanding of the educational landscape in District Poonch.

In essence, this research aspires not only to unravel the intricacies of educational proximity but also to serve as a catalyst for informed policymaking and intervention strategies aimed at enhancing educational accessibility and equity in District Poonch. Through collaborative efforts and interdisciplinary engagement, we endeavor to pave the way for fostering a more inclusive and empowering educational ecosystem, thereby nurturing the potential of every learner irrespective of their geographical location.

II. Review of Literature

Dwivedi's (2018) study on the Gujjars and Bakerwals communities in Jammu and Kashmir revealed that out of 3.2 lakh children aged 5 to 14 years from tribal communities, only around 44% attended school, with Bakerwal children having the lowest school enrollment rates. The study concluded that both communities were marked by social backwardness, low literacy rates, and high dropout rates compared to other social groups. The author attributed these issues to culturally rooted social stigmas such as child labour, domestic and hereditary occupational work, child marriage, parental illiteracy, lack of school availability or distance, and bi-annual migration.

Gul and Ganai (2017) examined tribal education in Jammu and Kashmir, focusing on the critical issues faced by these communities. They found lower tribal female literacy rates in India (49.35%) compared to the national average (68.53%), and in Jammu and Kashmir (39.70%) compared to the state average (60.6%). Significant gaps were observed between male and female literacy rates, both at the national level (19.18%) and in Jammu and Kashmir (20.9%). Additionally, the female literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir (8.36%) was lower than the national average. None of the districts in Jammu and Kashmir had female literacy rates above 35%. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of tribal females was very low and declined with each stage of school education, from 85.6% in the first stage to 18.1% in the final stage. In contrast, their dropout rate was significantly high, reaching 31.9% at the primary level and a staggering 68% at the elementary stage. The study concluded that factors such as deprived family support, discriminatory parental approach, poverty, distance to schools, and early marriage hampered tribal girls' education.

Dar and Najar (2017) conducted research to determine the unique characteristics of the educational system in Khansahib, where Gujjar and Bakerwal are the dominant tribes, both sedentary and nomadic. Using a non-experimental, cross-sectional research methodology, they collected data through observation schedules and self-constructed questionnaires. The study found that the government's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) program was only moderately successful in improving educational facilities. While school enrollment increased due to SSA, the quality of education remained subpar. Physical infrastructure like buildings and bathrooms were constructed, but quality education remained a distant dream. Teachers reported an untenable student-to-teacher ratio and a lack of parental and community support. Female teachers were found to be completely absent from classrooms. However, teacher-student communication improved with the recruitment of local tribal and non-tribal teachers, although teacher qualification remained an issue due to the hiring of underqualified teachers.

Gul and Ganai (2016) explored tribal education in Jammu and Kashmir, noting that tribal literacy rates were generally low, with significant gaps existing at national, regional, gender, and decadal levels. They found that 10 states, including Jammu and Kashmir, had literacy rates below the national average. The literacy gap between the total and tribal populations of India had been reduced by only 5.74% over the past five decades (from 17.77% in 1961 to 14.03%). Similarly, Jammu and Kashmir had managed to reduce the gap by only 1.5% in the previous decade (from 18.1% in 2001 to 16.6% in 2011). None of the districts in Jammu and Kashmir had crossed the literacy rate of 46%, and gender differences were revealed, with females having the lowest rates. The study also showed low gender gaps in tribal GER and a steep decline through the stages (from an initial gap of 8.79% to a final gap of 21.7%). Tribal dropout rates were high, with significant gender gaps and a doubling of rates from the primary to upper elementary stage (from 29.8% to 62.7%). The study concluded that numerous barriers existed for poor tribal performance in education, including physical, economic, parental, cultural, infrastructural, nomadic lifestyle, extreme living conditions, and early marriage.

Pajankar (2016) investigated the role of accessibility in improving attendance in two zones of Betul district in Madhya Pradesh. The case study found that as the level of schooling progressed from primary to upper primary or secondary, accessibility decreased, and the number of dropouts increased. Nearly 78% of habitations had access to upper primary schooling, while it was even lower at 26% for higher education. The survey also revealed that the distance between educational institutes increased as one progressed from primary to higher education levels. Students faced numerous indigenous issues and barriers, including a lack of road infrastructure, having to cross sloppy mountains and streams to reach school, and flooding during the rainy season, which exacerbated the situation.

Objectives of the Study

1. Identify the access to educational institutions of district Poonch.

III. Methodology

Sample of the Study

The population under study comprises government elementary schools in District Poonch, where both Gujjar and Bakerwal students are enrolled. The sample for this study includes all Gujjar and Bakerwal students enrolled in the government elementary schools of District Poonch, totalling 464 schools.

Sample Collection

Data collection was conducted across various zones of District Poonch. The investigator selected five schools from each zone to gather data.

Source of Data

Data for this study was sourced from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered from school heads, teachers, and Gujjar and Bakerwal students attending government elementary schools in District Poonch. Secondary data was collected from the Chief Education Office Poonch and all Zonal Educational Offices within Poonch.

Tools Utilized for the Study

The information blank utilized for this study was designed to capture insights into the access, enrollment, and retention of Gujjar and Bakerwal elementary school students in District Poonch. The investigator employed a self-constructed information blank to gather data from the respondents.

Analysis of the Study

In order to identify the access to educational institutions of District Poonch, the investigator collected the data from 300 students of all the zones and the response is below

Table.1: Showing the access to education in terms of distance from the student's habitation

DISTANCE	Number	%age
Less than 1 kilometre	976	73.94%
one to two kilometres	234	17.73%
More than two kilometres	110	8.33%
Total	1320	10.00%

The above table shows the overall distance of Elementary Schools from Student's habitation. The table reveals that 66.66% of schools are located within 01 kilometre from student's habitation, 28.33% of schools are located between 01 to 02 kilometres from student's habitation and only 5.00% of schools are located more than two kilometres.

Table 2: Showing the access of education with respect to mode of transport

Mode of transport	Number	%age
By Foot	1105	83.71
Public transport	215	16.29
School Bus	Nil	Nil
Private transport	Nil	Nil
Total	1320	100.0

The above table reveals the mode of transport used by tribal students in order to reach the schools. The above table depicts that 205(68.33) students travel by foot to reach the school and only 31.66% students used public transport to reach the school. In addition to that the table exposes that majority of student,s travel by foot to attend the daily schools.

Table 3: Showing the status of schools in term of physical availability

Infrastructure Facility	Number	Percentage
On Pains	100	21.55%
On Hills	279	60.12%
On Slope	85	18.31%
Total	464	100.0%

The above table shows the availability of computer lab in the govt elementary schools of District Poonch, the table depicts that out of 464 schools, only 3.23 schools have computer lab facility and 96.76% schools have no computer lab facility

Infrastructure Facility	Number	Percentage
Play ground	164	35.34%
Toilet Facility	448	95.55%
Separate toilet for girls	304	65.51%
Computer Lab	15	3.23%
Total	464	100.0%

The above table shows the infrastructure facility available in the government elementary schools of District Poonch. The table depicts that out of 464 schools 35.34% schools have playground, 95.55% schools have toilet facility, 65.51% schools have separate toilet facility for girls and

IV. CONCLUSION

An analysis of the elementary schools in District Poonch reveals several noteworthy findings. Firstly, a significant portion of the schools are conveniently located near students' homes, with 73.94% situated within 1 kilometer of habitation areas. However, a considerable number, 17.73%, are located between 1 to 2 kilometers away, and 8.33% are more than 2 kilometers distant. This distribution highlights the accessibility challenges faced by some students in reaching their educational institutions. Consequently, the majority of tribal students, 83.71%, rely on walking as their primary mode of transportation to school, while only 16.29% utilize public transport.

The topographical features of the region also influence the location of these schools. A substantial 60.12% of elementary schools are situated on hills, while 21.55% are on plains, and 18.31% are on slopes. This distribution underscores the unique challenges faced in providing educational facilities in a region with diverse terrain.

An examination of the infrastructural facilities within these schools reveals room for improvement. Only 35.4% of the government elementary schools in District Poonch have playground facilities, leaving 64.55% without dedicated spaces for physical activities and recreation. On a positive note, the majority of schools, 96.55%, have toilet facilities, with 65.51% providing separate toilet facilities for girls. However, a concerning statistic is that only 3.23% of the schools have computer lab facilities, leaving 96.76% without access to this essential technological resource in the modern era.

In conclusion, while most schools are located within a reasonable distance from students' habitations and have basic facilities like toilets, a significant number of schools lack essential amenities such as playgrounds and computer labs. Additionally, the lack of separate toilet facilities for girls in over a third of the schools is a concern that needs to be addressed.

V. Recommendations

- Explore options to establish more schools within a 1 km radius of students' habitations to reduce travel distances.
- Provide safe and reliable transportation options for students who need to travel longer distances to school.
- Allocate resources to construct playgrounds in schools that currently lack them, as playgrounds are crucial for students' physical development and well-being.
- Prioritize the establishment of computer labs in schools, as computer literacy and exposure to technology are essential in today's digital age.
- Ensure that all schools have separate toilet facilities for girls, as the lack of such facilities can discourage girls' attendance and participation in education.
- While a significant portion of students walk to school, consider implementing measures to ensure their safety, such as designated pedestrian paths or crossing guards near schools.
- Encourage and facilitate active transportation (walking or cycling) for students living within a reasonable distance from schools, as it promotes physical activity and environmental sustainability.
- Establish a system for periodic assessments of school infrastructure and amenities to identify and address deficiencies or maintenance needs promptly.
- Involve local communities and stakeholders in the planning and implementation of school infrastructure improvements to ensure their sustainability and relevance.
- Seek financial support from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, or private sector partnerships to fund the necessary infrastructure and amenity upgrades in schools.
- Implement cost-effective and innovative solutions, such as utilizing eco-friendly or locally sourced materials for construction, to maximize the impact of available resources.

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