

Regional Poverty among the Social and Religious Groups Across Regions in Uttar Pradesh, India

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Abstract: *The objective of this paper is to analyze and understand the regional patterns of poverty among the social and religious groups. The study is based on secondary data, descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, graphs, and charts as tools of analysis. The study reveals that the overall incidence of poverty has declined among all the social groups as well as among all religious groups in U.P. over the period from 2004-05 and 2011-12. The prevalence of rural poverty is generally higher in comparison to urban poverty in both periods. Nevertheless, the incident of rural and urban poverty varies by the social, region and religious groups. We found that more than half of the SC household population was poor in the year 2004-05, which came down to 41% in 2011-12. Across the regions, the highest incidence of poverty was in the eastern region and lowest in NUGP region of the state (2004-05), and the highest incidence of poverty is found in the central region instead of eastern region and lowest again in NUGP region of the state in 2011-12. This analysis assists the policymakers in identifying critical regions with respect to socially and economically excluded and marginalized sections so as improve the well-being of the poor people, who are at the bottom of the pyramid in the state.*

Keywords: Poverty, Social Group, Regional, Religious, Uttar Pradesh

1. Introduction

In India, hundreds of millions are poor by national and international measures. A central issue in the debate about poverty reduction and measure of poverty, is much debated in politics and academia. The recent debate on poverty has focused on the poverty line and measurement of expenditure. This discussion is far from unique to India. Much controversial discussion happened about economic growth, and its impact on poverty and inequality (Deaton & Kozel, 2005). The national and international estimates show that India is one of the fastest-growing large economies in the world. However, still, India is one of the poorest countries in the G-20 nations (Banerjee, 2019). India's official estimates reveal that the incidence of poverty has been declining continuously. But yet, the prevalence of poverty is much higher, especially in STs and SCs in rural India. It means the benefits of growth have not been distributed in everyone in equal proportion. If growth is unequally distributed, its effect on the poverty reduction will be less depending on whether the income of the poor grows by less than average (Deaton & Kozel, 2005).

The identification of BPL families is problematic. (Drèze, 2019, Drèze & Khera, 2010). The regular consumer expenditure survey pioneered by P.C Mahalanobis in 1940 and 1950 (Deaton & Kozel, 2005). The identification of poor households was done state-wise, based on poverty measurements supplied by the Planning Commission (NITI Aayog), by using NSS data. The measures of poverty themselves are open to many criticisms. But at the ground level, more importantly, there is no clear way of identifying poor households. The biggest problem in identifying BPL household is the unavailability of household wise data on monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE). In rural Uttar Pradesh, poor families are usually trying to identify via proxy indicators like asset ownership and job. For example, in BPL census 2002, poor households were identified by using a scoring method which was based on thirteen proxy

indicators. The whole approach had a hit-or-miss character due to the imprecise proxy indicators compounded by unreliable survey methods. Because of this method, eligible households were not identified as BPL, and many of the non-eligible APL households were identified as BPL. The stringent nature of the poverty lines, which are based on the relatively low poverty line. It does not help much to eradicate poverty (Drèze, J. 2019).

Research on social groups reveals that the STs and SCs have been more poor and vulnerable than OBCs and Others. Further it is seen that economic progress of the STs and SCs have been very slow as compared to the other groups over time (Thorat and Dubey 2012; Sundaram and Tendulkar 2003; John and Mutatkar 2005). The caste and class-based hierarchy are a bad sign for the economic, social and political development, especially for the STs and SCs. It is a big problem especially for the lower castes (STs and SCs) and poor people. In other words, "caste is the monster that crosses the path, you cannot have economic and political reform unless, kill this monster" Dr B R Ambedkar, 1937 (Roy, A. 2017)¹.

Uttar Pradesh is the most populous (19.98 Crores, 16.5% population of India- Census 2011) state of India. Most vulnerable to poverty have been identified to be scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST) among the social groups (Sundaram, K, & Tendulkar, S.D 2003). The incidence of poverty has been encouraging and experiencing socio-economic development, especially from the last two decades. However, the development experience in various indicators is still lagged behind and inappropriate as compared to the other state in India. Uttar Pradesh has been facing many challenges in its path of socio-political, and economic development, like providing basic facilities to the poor and marginalized groups, economic opportunities for

¹ Annihilation of Caste *the Annotated Critical Edition* by B.R. Ambedkar Edited by S. Anand Introduction by Arundhati Roy

unemployed people. And ensuring an effective social and economic safety net to reduce vulnerability and poverty, especially for SC and ST (Mamgain, 2017).

The 61st and 68th round of the NSSO distinguished four social groups, two socially disadvantage groups of SC & ST and two other social groups of OBC and 'Other' which have been already classified in the constitution of India. The socio-economic condition of the SC and ST was severely affected with starvation, extreme poverty, untouchability, caste discrimination and other basic need for sustain life. SC and ST was not protected as economically, socially and politically as other social groups. In India, specially lower cast people kept economically poor, educationally ever backwards, socially enslave and suffer from grave political disability in which no other community suffers before independent. The good thing is that after independent, there have been continuing decline in poverty, untouchability, caste discrimination and other serious economic, social and political problems (Thorat, 2005).

Some region of Uttar Pradesh, the socio-economic condition of the poor people, has been seen in a downward spiral of impoverishment, hunger and unhealthy. The socio-economic and political treatment with the poor people and rich people vary because of the severity of poverty and social and economic status of castes and class. There is need a special focus as well as motivation to the extremely poor and more vulnerable people so they can help themselves in the ladder of social and economic development, at least they can able to foothold on the bottom rung. Once the poor people foothold on the bottom of first step of ladder, at the same time, the process will be start fight against poverty, hunger, illiteracy, unemployment, lack of safe drinking water, sanitation and killer of diseases. Poverty and inequality in Uttar Pradesh continue to be a major problem, the incidence of rural poverty (30.40%, 2011-12) is much higher than Urban poverty (26.06%, 2011-12), and around 59.81 million (29.43%, 2011-12) of the population are below the poverty line in Uttar Pradesh. The present study found that the prevalence of poverty (41%) in scheduled caste is much higher and lowest poverty (30%) in 'Other' social groups in 2011-12 (Planning Commission, 2011)

Most of the Indian States have suffered from regional disparities and socio-political and economic inequality and even after 73 years of independence. Some of the regions of Uttar Pradesh are very backwards and economically poor, and it abode of the largest proportion of poor in India (Diwakar, 2009). The social and economic inequality is one of the major cause of poverty in Uttar Pradesh. Caste and class matter. Higher castes people have higher social status

and social capital, and lower castes people have lower social status and social capital. There is a huge gap between economically rich and poor people, and higher castes and lower castes people. The poor people and lower caste people have been experiencing more discrimination in comparison to rich people (Drèze, 2018; Chandra, 2018).

To look at the issues of inequality and poverty, after independence India started various steps, for example, the abolition of Zamindari system, imposition of ceiling and acquisition of excess land and their redistribution among the landless household. However, in negligence of state administration and the absence of the political will, land reform could not be implemented to bring the appropriate changes in property relations (Diwakar, 2009).

2. Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are as follows;

- To estimate the magnitude of poverty among the social, and religious group in Uttar Pradesh.
- To analyze and understanding the regional patterns of poverty among the social and religious groups in Uttar Pradesh.

3. Methodology and Data Sources

Descriptive statistics including cross tabulation, graphs are used as tools of analysis. SPSS, STATA and Excel statistical packages have been used for estimation and tabulation. To estimate the magnitude of poverty, we have used secondary data. The source of secondary data is unit-level data of the 61st (2004-05) and 68th (2011-12) rounds of NSSO based on consumption expenditure survey to estimate poverty in terms of 'head-count ratio' (HCR is the proportion of the population that is counted as poor).

4. Analysis and Results

4.1 Regional Incidence of Poverty among the Social Groups

Uttar Pradesh is vast, and is divided into five regions of Uttar Pradesh (Northern Upper Ganga Plains, Central, Eastern, Southern, and Southern Upper Ganga Plains- NSSO 2011-12). It differs widely in social, economic and political terms. Earlier studies found that the majority of the upper castes households have larger resources that lead to higher living standards as compared to the lower castes (Diwakar, 2009; Chandra, 2016).

Table 1: The Region-wise Incident of Poverty among the Social Groups in Uttar Pradesh (Percentage of the Population Below the Poverty Line, 2004-05)

Region-wise Poverty of U.P. (NSSO 61 st rounds data)							
Sector	Social Group	NUGP	Central	Eastern	Southern	SUGP	Total*
Rural	ST	0	0	59.61	0	0	41.99
	SC	41.23	46.09	68.91	71.4	47.57	56.48
	OBC	25.72	40.8	51.28	36.78	37.97	42.17
	Other	11.03	21.45	32.03	36.94	23.48	26.01
	All	26.33	38.59	51.91	44.66	37.22	42.67
Urban	ST	0	21.24	61	3.14	0	40.3
	SC	48.8	33.44	63.16	40.98	41.82	44.24

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	OBC	42.07	28.23	46.98	57.27	43.86	42.71
	Other	18.45	17.42	19.25	37.62	26.1	20.85
	All	31.95	23.84	41.24	48.22	35.65	34.05
Overall	ST	0	7.01	59.81	0	0	41.68
	SC	42.3	44.2	68.59	63.08	46.78	55.06
	OBC	30.25	38.4	50.78	40.62	38.93	42.26
	Other	15.28	19.64	30.11	37.09	24.42	24.26
	All	28.2	34.92	50.75	45.43	36.89	40.98

Source: Calculated from NSSO 61st round data, Government of India, (2004-05)

*Total rural, urban and overall poverty of Uttar Pradesh

Table 2: Region wise incident of Poverty among the Social Groups in Uttar Pradesh- the percentage of the population below the poverty line, (2011–12).

Region-wise Poverty of U.P. (NSSO 68 th rounds data)							
Sector	Social Group	NUGP	Central	Eastern	Southern	SUGP	Total
Rural	ST	1.97	54	62.33	15.78	27.4	27.01
	SC	13.61	50.23	47.55	45.49	35.72	41.11
	OBC	16.29	44.86	34.13	29.16	23.76	30.72
	Other	7.98	24.02	11.64	4.75	9.57	12.47
	All	13.14	42.48	34.57	30.22	24.93	30.4
Urban	ST	0	3.6	44.44	92.39	8.66	16.31
	SC	12.5	52.11	60.31	38.32	41.16	39.14
	OBC	23.43	35.58	37.85	33.55	29.73	32.31
	Other	5.41	14.19	9.58	4.37	22.75	12.77
	All	13.65	27.52	33.51	26.88	29.33	26.17
Overall	ST	1.82	37.37	60.96	47.24	22.59	25.6
	SC	13.37	50.39	48.34	44.39	36.69	40.87
	OBC	18.19	42.41	34.64	30.16	25.06	31.04
	Other	6.78	19.76	11.23	4.63	15.11	12.58
	All	13.3	38.56	34.43	29.47	26.02	29.5

Source: Calculated from NSSO 68th rounds data, Government of India, 2011–12.

Table 1 shows that the incidence of poverty is much higher in the Eastern part (50.7%) and Southern part (45.4%) than the rest. Particularly, the Eastern region was caught in the back-breaking rural poverty (51.9%) and urban poverty (41.24%). Among the social groups, the highest rural poverty was in SCs (68.91%) and STs (59.61%) in 2004-05 in this region. The results indicate that across the region, poverty is highest in the Eastern region of UP and lowest in the NUGP of UP. Coming to different social groups, we see that in all the regions, incidence of poverty is the highest among SCs and the lowest among the “Other” social group. Indeed, the incidence of poverty is more than double among the SCs compared to the “Other” social group, indicating that the former suffer great deal not only from poverty but also relative economic deprivation.

Table 2 shows that overall the incidence of poverty has declined in all the regions, except the central region of Uttar Pradesh. The study found that more than half of the SCs was poor in the year 2004-05, which come down to 41% in 2011-12. Across the region, among the social groups, the prevalence of poverty is much higher among the SCs and STs households, and lower among the “Other” households in both the periods. However, it is seen that in 2011-12 the incidence of poverty become nearly half of the corresponding incidence in 2004-05 for the “Other” social group, whereas the decline was close to only about a quarter for the SCs. In both the periods and most of regions, the incidence of poverty was higher in rural areas compared to the urban area, overall. Similar rural, urban pattern is the incidence of poverty is also seen for SCs and “Others”, but it is a mixed picture for OBCs.

4.2 Religious Pattern of Incidence of Poverty

In this section, the present study examines the prevalence of poverty among the three religious groups and across five regions of the state. The earlier study reveals that socially and economically excluded people among Dalit and Muslims made improvement in all the sectors, due to their efforts, poverty has declined (Jeffrey D Sachs 2005). Still, the incidence of poverty is much higher among the Muslims than Hindus, and lowest among the ‘Other’ religion (Christianity, Sikhism etc.) in UP. Tables 3 and 4 reveal that across the religious groups, the prevalence of poverty among Muslims is much higher in comparison to Hindus and Other groups in both rural and urban areas in 2004-05 and 2011-12.

Across the region, Table 3 shows that the highest incidence of poverty (50.7%) was in the eastern region and lowest poverty (28.2%) in NUGP, and same thing happened in rural areas, but in case of urban areas, the incidence of poverty was highest in the southern region of UP in 2004-2005.

Table 4 shows that across the region, the highest prevalence of poverty is in the central region and lowest in NUGP region and even very similar results found in rural areas. However, in case of urban areas, the highest incidence of poverty is in eastern region of UP and lowest in NUGP region in 2011-12.

Table 3: Religion Wise Incident of Poverty in Uttar Pradesh- Percentage of the Population Below the Poverty Line (2004-05)

Incidence of Poverty by Religion, 2004-05							
Sector	Religion	NUGP	Central	Eastern	Southern	SUGP	Total
Rural	Hindus	22.6	38.2	51.9	42.8	34.9	41.92
	Muslims	35.7	42.1	51.4	83.2	51.9	46.85
	Others	0	0	67.1		57.9	45.39
	Total	26.4	38.6	51.9	44.7	37.2	42.67
Urban	Hindu	20.7	19	37.2	42.7	29.2	27.53
	Muslim	46.6	39.4	50.2	67	52.9	48.43
	Others	0	0	0	14.6	1.5	1.47
	Total	31.9	23.8	41.1	48.2	35.7	34.02
Overall	Hindus	22.1	34.1	50.6	42.8	34	39.62
	Muslims	40.4	41	51.2	73.6	52.3	47.4
	Others	0	0	60.6	14.6	14.6	17.87
	Total	28.2	34.9	50.7	45.4	36.9	40.97

Source: Calculated from NSSO 61th round data, Government of India, (2004-05)

Table 4: Religion Wise Incident of Poverty in Uttar Pradesh (percentage of the population below the poverty line, 2011–12).

Incidence of Poverty by Religion, 2011-12							
Sector	Religion	NUGP	Central	Eastern	Southern	SUGP	Total
Rural	Hindu	9.6	38.9	34.8	30	23.8	29.83
	Muslim	20.2	64.5	33.2	39	35.3	34
	Other			0		0	0
	Total	13.3	42.5	34.6	30.3	25	30.44
Urban	Hindu	7.7	16.2	30.2	26.7	27.6	21.34
	Muslim	27	42.8	41.5	36.3	33.7	36.35
	Other	5.3	0	0	0	0	2.08
	Total	13.7	27.6	33.6	27	29.4	26.23
Overall	Hindu	9	34.6	34.3	29.2	24.5	28.37
	Muslim	22.2	53.2	35.3	38.3	34.4	34.88
	Other	5.3	0	0	0	0	1.44
	Total	13.4	38.6	34.4	29.6	26.1	29.54

Source: Calculated from NSSO 68th rounds data, Government of India, 2011–12

Coming to the incidence of poverty across religious groups, we see that cutting across regions, and rural-urban categories, incidence of poverty was highest among Muslims followed by Hindus and lowest among the “Others”– both in 2004-05 and 2011-12. The only exception was the rural Eastern UP, where the incidence of poverty among the Hindus was marginally higher than that among the Muslims.

5. Conclusions and Policy Implications

The findings of the present study tried to build an understanding of the regional incidence of poverty among the social and religious groups in Uttar Pradesh. The study reveals that the overall incidence of poverty and region poverty has declined among the social groups as well as religious groups in UP, over the period from 2004-05 and 2011-12.

The prevalence of rural poverty is generally higher in comparison to urban poverty in both the periods. Nevertheless, the incident of rural and urban poverty varies by the social, region and religious groups. Across the sector (rural, urban and overall), the prevalence of poverty is much higher among the SC households than ST, OBC and Others in both the study periods. Across the social groups, the highest poverty is observed among ‘SC’ and the lowest among ‘Others’ in both the study periods. Across social groups, the persistent urban poverty is slightly higher than the rural poverty in ‘Other’ (2004-2005), and OBC (2011-12). The study found that more than half of the SC

household population was poor in the year 2004-05, which come down to 41% in 2011-12.

Across the regions, the highest incidence of poverty was in the eastern region and lowest in NUGP region of the state (2004-05). Although, the incidence of poverty has declined among all the regions, and the highest incidence of poverty is found in the central region instead of eastern region and lowest again in NUGP region of the state in 2011-12.

The prevalence of poverty has been analyzed by social groups (ST, SC, OBC, and Other) and religion (Hindu, Muslim and Others) in five regions (NSSO 2004-05 and 2011-12). Although, the incidence of poverty among the social group, especially economically, socially and politically excluded section of the society witnessed a decline over the study period, however, an enormous chunk of poor household, who are bottom of the pyramid among the social groups, continue to be in the need of serious action, particularly in Eastern, Central, and Southern regions of the state, towards poverty alleviation.

Hopefully, this analysis of the incidence of poverty among the social, region and religious groups would assist the policymakers in identifying critical regions with respect to socially and economically excluded and marginalized sections, so as improve the well-being of the poor people, who are at the bottom of the pyramid in the state.

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