

Factors Hindering Professional Skills and Entrepreneurship among Unemployed Youth from Backward Classes in Rural Areas, and the Need for Social Work Intervention

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Abstract: *In the current era, India envisions becoming a developed nation by the year 2047. With this objective in mind, various policies are being implemented at the national level. However, in rural areas, when individuals attempt to establish businesses to foster their own development, they frequently encounter numerous challenges across social, economic, and political spheres. In India, youth belonging to Backward Classes (SC/ST/OBC) face historical and structural barriers regarding opportunities in education, employment, and entrepreneurship. This issue is particularly acute in rural regions. The objective of the present research is to examine the level of vocational skills among unemployed youth from Backward Classes, the socio-economic factors hindering entrepreneurship, and the necessity of social work interventions. The findings indicate that a lack of skills, social discrimination, financial constraints, and a dearth of guidance constitute the primary obstacles. These barriers can be overcome through social work interventions involving empowerment, training, and resource linkage.*

Keywords: Backward Classes, Unemployment, Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, Social Work

1. Introduction

Social inequality in India is historically deeply entrenched. Although the Indian Constitution guarantees equality and social justice, backward classes still lag behind in terms of education and employment. This disparity is particularly pronounced in rural areas. Members of the backward classes often perceive themselves as being left behind, while members of other social groups frequently strive to keep the backward classes deprived of their rights. Consequently, the backward classes are often observed to be excluded from developmental initiatives.

Backward-class youth in rural areas face a dual set of challenges, including not only unemployment but also social exclusion, a scarcity of resources, and limited opportunities. Even if rural youth from backward classes establish their own shops to earn a livelihood, customers from other castes visit these establishments in very limited numbers. This significantly impacts their employment prospects. Furthermore, there exists a prevailing social mindset that dictates that individuals from backward classes should perform only menial or lower-status jobs.

The government has implemented skill development schemes through agencies such as the National Skill Development Corporation and NITI Aayog; however, the benefits of these initiatives reach the backward-class youth only to a limited extent.

2. Objectives of the Study

1) To examine the level of vocational skills among rural youth belonging to backward classes.

- 2) To identify the social, economic, and cultural factors that hinder entrepreneurship.
- 3) To investigate the impact of social discrimination on employment and entrepreneurship.
- 4) To analyze the necessity and effectiveness of social work interventions.

Hypotheses

- 1) There is a significant lack of vocational skills among youth belonging to backward classes.
- 2) Social discrimination constitutes a major obstacle to entrepreneurship.
- 3) Social work interventions lead to an increase in employment and entrepreneurship.

3. Review of Literature

Various studies have indicated that, compared to their counterparts, youth belonging to backward classes in rural areas have limited access to opportunities in education and employment. Furthermore, rural youth from backward classes derive only limited benefits from skill development programs. Due to a lack of capital and guidance regarding entrepreneurship, they are unable to generate self-employment opportunities. Moreover, social discrimination leads to a decline in their self-confidence. From the perspective of social work, empowerment and social justice are regarded as fundamental principles.

4. Research Methodology

a) Research design Type: This study employs a descriptive and analytical research design.

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b) Study Area: The rural areas of Hingoli District constitute the geographical scope of this study, while the population universe comprises youth belonging to backward classes.

c) Data Collection Methods: The observation method and the interview method have been utilized for the collection of data.

4.1 Lack of Professional Skills

Youth from backward classes often exhibit a deficiency in the following skills:

- a) **Communication Skills:** Youth in rural areas tend to speak in their local dialects; consequently, their language usage differs significantly from standard forms of speech. As a result, their inability to effectively utilize English, Hindi, or other globally recognized languages creates significant barriers to effective communication.
- b) **Technical and Vocational Skills:** Youth face numerous technical challenges when attempting to establish an enterprise or launch a startup. These challenges include a lack of appropriate equipment and resources, as well as a deficiency in the specific vocational skills required for business operations- factors that serve as major impediments to creating successful ventures.
- c) **Digital Literacy:** In the current era- characterized by the rapid emergence of various new software applications and technologies- youth in rural areas often find it difficult to immediately access or acquire these digital skills. This lack of digital literacy acts as a significant obstacle when attempting to establish any business or industry.
- d) **The Entrepreneurial Mindset:** In the global landscape of entrepreneurship, numerous competitions and rivalries exist. Consequently, a prevailing mindset emerges- one characterized by the belief that "we will not be able to survive" amidst such competition. This very mindset acts as a deterrent, keeping rural youth from venturing into the field of entrepreneurship. As a result, they refrain from undertaking any form of risk to pivot toward business or entrepreneurial endeavors. Ultimately, this leads to a reduction in employment opportunities.

4.2 Barriers to Entrepreneurship

- a) **Social Barriers: Caste Discrimination:** In rural areas, caste-based discrimination does not dissipate as readily as it does within urban communities. People belonging to various castes and tribes in rural regions know one another intimately; consequently, a person's caste identity inevitably comes to the fore in the context of their business activities. Thus, caste discrimination is observed to be a significant impediment to entrepreneurship. For instance, in a rural setting, even if an individual from a backward class establishes a grocery store, a distinct disparity is often observed: customers tend to patronize shops owned by individuals from other castes rather than those owned by the backward-class individual.
- b) **Social Boycott:** A mindset often prevails among villagers wherein a specific youth is- based on historical prejudices- perceived as belonging to a "lower" or "backward" caste. In some instances, individuals from such castes may even have been subjected to social

ostracism. Consequently, this phenomenon exerts a profound and detrimental impact on their professional and business lives.

- c) **Financial Barriers: Lack of Capital:** Youths from backward classes in rural areas typically do not possess a traditional entrepreneurial mindset. Historically, their livelihoods were tied to the '12-Balute and 18- Alute systems'; however, if they wish to establish a new type of business today, their financial status is generally insufficient to support such an endeavor. Furthermore, given their circumstances, there is little expectation that they would be able to repay a substantial loan if they were to secure one. Moreover, due to poverty or generally modest household conditions, it becomes unfeasible for them to launch any kind of industrial venture or startup.
- d) **Difficulties in Obtaining Loans:** Starting any type of industry or business necessitates an absolute requirement for capital and funds. Since these individuals fundamentally lack the personal capital required for investment, they are compelled to seek loans from banks or other financial institutions- a process that requires the submission of extensive documentation. However, the precise lack of these very documents constitutes a major obstacle, significantly hindering their ability to secure the necessary loans.
- e) **Educational Barriers: Lack of Quality Education:** In rural areas, schools and colleges offering diverse forms of education and training at the local level are often unavailable to the youth. Consequently, they are compelled to travel to other villages or distant cities to pursue their studies. However, acquiring such education entails significant financial expenditure- funds which they often do not have access to. As a result, they are unable to acquire quality, skill-based, and vocational education, nor can they access training in entrepreneurship. Consequently, even the lack of a basic educational foundation poses a significant obstacle when attempting to establish a business.
- f) **Technical Barriers:** Youth in rural areas face a scarcity of digital resources and, more specifically, encounter difficulties regarding digital literacy. This creates impediments to their engagement in business and entrepreneurial activities, further exacerbating the shortage of access to digital tools and infrastructure.
- g) **Institutional Barriers:** The government implements various schemes and programs at the state and national levels; however, information regarding these initiatives does not always reach the marginalized youth in rural areas in a timely manner. Consequently, individuals who meet the minimum eligibility criteria remain unaware of- and thus excluded from- these opportunities. Due to a lack of awareness regarding government schemes, the intended information fails to reach the target beneficiaries. As a result, they are unable to secure immediate employment.

4.3 The Role of Social Work Intervention

The role of social workers is of paramount importance:

- a) **Empowerment:** Through the application of various social work methods, individuals from backward classes in rural areas can be empowered- socially, psychologically, and economically- with a specific focus

on fostering entrepreneurship and enhancing their ability to secure employment. Social work proves beneficial in boosting the self-confidence of rural youth, thereby encouraging the development of professional skills and an entrepreneurial spirit among those who have attained this state of empowerment. Furthermore, shifting the mindset of women is crucial, as both entrepreneurship and business ventures inherently require the willingness to accept and manage risks.

- b) **Social Justice:** In rural areas, it is absolutely essential to transform the attitudes of people belonging to other castes and religions regarding individuals from backward classes, thereby eliminating existing prejudices and discrimination. On this basis, it becomes necessary to cultivate a collective consciousness among all sections of society- instilling the realization that their own progress is inextricably linked to the development of the entire community. The methods of social work play a vital role in establishing this social justice, making it possible to effectively combat discrimination.
- c) **Skills Training:** By providing vocational education and training- specifically tailored to be business-oriented and employment-focused- to young men and women from all castes and tribes in rural areas, they can be equipped with the necessary skills to engage in business activities. This process is observed to have a transformative impact, contributing significantly to broader social change.
- d) **Resource Linkage:** When young individuals aspire to secure employment, establish a business, or set up an industrial venture, they face a critical need for capital. This capital must typically be raised by securing various forms of loans from financial institutions, such as banks. To facilitate this access to capital- specifically for youth from backward classes- social work interventions play a key role in connecting them with resources ranging from government-level initiatives to various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and public institutions. By securing such support, it becomes feasible for these youth to mobilize the necessary funds to pursue their professional and entrepreneurial aspirations. To achieve this, the mediation of NGOs and the effective dissemination of government schemes to the target youth population are absolutely essential.
- e) **Advocacy:** To ensure that marginalized youth in rural areas secure employment, it is crucial to amplify their voices and convey their concerns to the government through various channels- including strikes, protests, and rallies at different levels. To this end, providing them with appropriate guidance and counsel is essential; equally important is offering them counseling support. It is imperative to raise a strong voice in defense of the rights of these youth.

5. Conclusion

Social work intervention is absolutely vital for fostering a professional and entrepreneurial mindset among marginalized youth in rural areas. This study clearly demonstrates that marginalized youth face a dual challenge: on one hand, they contend with unemployment, and on the other, they grapple with social discrimination. Social work interventions can provide effective solutions to these multifaceted problems. To facilitate the development of marginalized rural youth, it is

imperative to enhance their professional skills and cultivate their entrepreneurial capabilities. Through the medium of social work, it is essential to empower these youth, raise awareness regarding their rights and opportunities, and ensure the availability of necessary resources.

6. Suggestions

- 1) Special skill development schemes must reach youth from backward classes.
- 2) Financial assistance should be provided for entrepreneurship.
- 3) Awareness generation is essential to reduce social discrimination.
- 4) An active role by social workers is necessary.

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