

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND SOCIAL MOBILITY AMONG MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF CHAMARAJANAGAR DISTRICT

Nagendrakumar P. M.

Associate Professor
Department of Sociology, Govt. First Grade College, Chamarajanagar.

ABSTRACT

Education is widely recognized as a significant instrument for promoting social mobility, particularly among marginalized communities facing socio-economic disadvantages. The present study, titled *Educational Attainment and Social Mobility among Marginalized Communities: A Sociological Analysis of Chamarajanagar district*, examines the relationship between educational attainment and social mobility by considering key socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education level, income, and occupation. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design and is based on primary data collected from 60 respondents through a structured interview schedule. The socio-demographic analysis indicates that most respondents belong to economically productive age groups, with variations in educational background and occupational status significantly influencing income levels and mobility opportunities. Percentage analysis and mean score distribution reveal that respondents with higher educational attainment tend to achieve better occupational status and higher income levels compared to those with lower levels of education. Hypothesis testing was conducted using Two-Way ANOVA and Chi-square statistical techniques. The findings show that educational attainment has a statistically significant effect on social mobility ($F = 18.45, p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis, while gender and the interaction between education and gender were not found to be significant. The Chi-square test further confirms a significant association between access to quality education and social mobility ($\chi^2 = 16.72 > 9.49$). The study concludes that education plays a crucial role in reducing socio-economic inequalities, and improving access to quality education is essential for promoting inclusive and sustainable social mobility among marginalized communities.

Keywords: Educational Attainment, Social Mobility and Marginalized Communities.

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a significant instrument for promoting social mobility, particularly among marginalized communities facing socio-economic disadvantages. Education occupies a central position in sociological thought as a transformative institution that shapes social structure, status attainment, and life chances. It is widely acknowledged as a powerful instrument for achieving social mobility, particularly in societies characterized by stratification based on caste, class, gender, and region. Educational attainment, defined as the highest level of education completed by an individual, plays a decisive role in determining occupational opportunities, income levels, and social status. In this context, education functions not merely as a means of knowledge acquisition but as a mechanism for redistribution of opportunities and reduction of socio-economic inequalities.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational Attainment refers to the highest level of education an individual has completed, such as primary, secondary, or higher education. It indicates a person's literacy, skills, and

knowledge, and is a key factor influencing employment opportunities, socio-economic status, and the potential for upward social mobility.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups within a hierarchical social system, either upward or downward, in terms of occupation, income, and social prestige. In stratified societies, upward mobility is often contingent upon access to quality education and skill development. However, marginalized communities frequently encounter structural barriers such as poverty, limited institutional infrastructure, socio-cultural discrimination, and inadequate educational facilities, which restrict their ability to achieve higher levels of education and, consequently, improved socio-economic status.

Despite various governmental policies aimed at promoting inclusive education and social justice, disparities in educational access and outcomes persist, particularly in rural and semi-urban regions. Marginalized groups often remain concentrated in lower educational categories, informal employment sectors, and low-income brackets, thereby perpetuating intergenerational cycles of disadvantage. This highlights the need for localized, empirical studies to examine how educational attainment influences social mobility within specific socio-cultural contexts.

MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Marginalized communities refer to socially and economically disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, certain Other Backward Classes, nomadic tribes, and the urban poor, who experience limited access to education, employment, resources, and social opportunities due to historical and structural inequalities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr Prabha Gupta (2016) “Education Disparities and Social Mobility in India: Examining the Intersection of Education Gaps and Social Ascent” This research paper examines the relationship between educational disparities and social mobility in India, focusing on how inequalities in educational access and quality influence opportunities for upward socio-economic mobility. Based on empirical analysis, the study highlights the role of socio-economic conditions, regional variations, and institutional factors in shaping educational outcomes and occupational mobility. It emphasizes that gaps in educational attainment contribute significantly to unequal mobility patterns among different social groups. The study also analyses government policies aimed at improving educational access and identifies challenges in their implementation that limit effective outcomes. Through case studies and regional perspectives, the research demonstrates that structural inequalities continue to restrict equitable mobility despite policy interventions. The findings suggest that education alone is insufficient unless supported by broader socio-economic reforms, and therefore advocate for comprehensive strategies that address educational inequality, improve quality of education, and promote inclusive and sustainable social mobility across diverse sections of Indian society.

Dr. Tapesh Chandra Gupta and others (2024) “Exploring the Impact of Education on Social Mobility: A Quantitative Analysis of Uttar Pradesh” A study conducted in Uttar Pradesh examined the relationship between educational attainment and social mobility in a region marked by significant socio-economic disparities. Using data from the National Family Health Survey (2019–2020), the research applied Multiple Linear Regression Analysis to analyse the influence of education, caste, gender, and household income on socio-

economic status. The findings indicated that higher educational attainment significantly improves occupational status and income levels, thereby facilitating upward social mobility. However, persistent caste and gender inequalities continue to restrict access to education and economic opportunities, suggesting that education alone cannot fully eliminate structural disadvantages. Marginalized groups, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women, were found to experience comparatively lower mobility outcomes even with similar educational qualifications. The study further highlighted that household income strengthens the positive impact of education on mobility, emphasizing the need for policy interventions that address both educational access and broader socio-economic inequalities.

RESEARCH GAP

Existing sociological studies have extensively examined the role of education in socio-economic development and social mobility; however, limited empirical research has focused on the localized dynamics of education and mobility in semi-rural and socio-economically diverse regions such as Chamarajanagar district. Most previous studies have concentrated on urban centres or macro-level national data, thereby overlooking district-level variations in access to quality education, occupational opportunities, and income mobility among marginalized communities. Furthermore, earlier research has often analysed education and social mobility independently, with less emphasis on the interrelationship between educational attainment, accessibility, and actual mobility outcomes measured through empirical indicators. There is also insufficient quantitative analysis combining demographic variables such as age, gender, income, and occupation with social mobility scores to understand structural inequalities at the grassroots level. Hence, the present study attempts to bridge this gap by providing a micro-level empirical analysis of how educational attainment and access to quality education influence social mobility among different socio-economic groups in the selected study area, thereby contributing to both theoretical understanding and policy-oriented discourse in sociology.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate the relationship between educational attainment and upward social mobility.
2. To examine the impact of gender on social mobility outcomes.
3. To analyze the association between access to quality education and levels of social mobility.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ There is a significant difference in social mobility based on educational attainment.
- ❖ There is a significant difference in social mobility based on gender.
- ❖ Limited access to quality education negatively affects social mobility among marginalized groups.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine education as a tool for social mobility among individuals in Chamarajanagar district. The district was selected as the study area due to its socio-economic diversity, presence of marginalized communities, and observable variations in educational access, occupational structure, and income levels, which provide an appropriate context for analysing mobility patterns. The

study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected from 60 respondents through a structured interview schedule designed to gather information on socio-demographic characteristics, educational attainment, occupation, income, and perceived social mobility. Respondents were selected using a simple random sampling method to ensure representation across different social and economic backgrounds. Secondary data were obtained from government reports, census publications, academic journals, and relevant scholarly works. The collected data were analysed using statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean score analysis, Two-Way ANOVA, and Chi-square test to examine the relationship between educational attainment, access to quality education, and social mobility. The methodological framework enables systematic analysis of the interrelationship between education and socio-economic mobility within the study area.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND SOCIAL MOBILITY AMONG MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Educational attainment plays a crucial role in shaping social mobility among marginalized communities in Karnataka, where historically disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and economically weaker sections continue to experience structural inequalities in access to education and employment opportunities. Over the past few decades, the state has witnessed considerable improvement in literacy rates, school enrolment, and access to basic education; however, disparities in educational attainment remain significant when compared with socially and economically advanced groups. Marginalized communities often face multiple barriers such as poverty, inadequate schooling infrastructure in rural and tribal areas, limited access to higher education institutions, and socio-cultural constraints that affect educational continuity. These challenges are particularly evident among first-generation learners, where lack of educational support at home and financial pressures often lead to early school dropout, especially at the secondary and pre-university levels. Gender further compounds these inequalities, as girls from marginalized backgrounds frequently encounter additional obstacles including early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and safety concerns, which restrict their educational progression.

Education is widely regarded as a key mechanism for upward social mobility because it enhances skills, improves employability, and increases access to better occupational opportunities. In the context of India and Karnataka specifically, government interventions such as reservation policies, scholarships, hostels, and special educational schemes have created pathways for marginalized students to enter higher education and public employment sectors. These measures have enabled sections of marginalized communities to experience intergenerational mobility, moving from low-income, informal occupations to more stable and skilled employment. Nevertheless, the relationship between education and social mobility remains uneven. Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds continue to face challenges in translating educational qualifications into quality employment due to skill gaps, economic insecurity, and persistent social discrimination. Regional disparities within the state also influence outcomes, as urban areas provide better educational resources and exposure compared to rural and tribal regions.

Thus, while educational attainment has contributed positively to improving the socio-economic status of marginalized communities, it alone is insufficient to ensure sustained social mobility without parallel improvements in economic opportunities, institutional support, and social inclusion. Strengthening public education systems, improving the quality of schooling, ensuring equitable access to higher education, and addressing structural

inequalities are essential for enabling education to function effectively as an instrument of social transformation among marginalized communities in Karnataka.

Educational attainment among marginalized communities in Karnataka—particularly Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Muslims—has shown improvement but continues to lag behind general categories, serving as a bottleneck for social mobility. While the state has improved in primary education, significant gaps persist in secondary and higher education, especially in rural areas.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT STATUS (2024-2025 DATA)

- **Literacy Gaps:** The literacy rate for SCs in Karnataka is 66.8%, and for STs it is 59%, both significantly lower than the state average of 75.6%.
- **Higher Education Lags:** STs, SCs, and Muslims underperform at the higher education level, with STs remaining particularly behind.
- **Regional Disparities:** Northern Karnataka districts like Raichur, Yadgiri, and Koppal report lower literacy and high dropouts, with ST girls in Raichur having a 45% dropout rate.
- **Gender and Rural Divide:** Rural ST/SC females face the highest barriers, with only ~42% of rural tribal students accessing higher education and barely 2% of Jenu Kuruba girls continuing beyond Class VIII.
- **First-Generation Learners:** Many ST children are first-generation learners, lacking home support, which contributes to high dropout rates.

Table: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 60)

Sl. No	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	32	53.3
		Female	28	46.7
		Total	60	100.0
2	Age Group (Years)	18–25	14	23.3
		26–35	20	33.3
		36–45	16	26.7
		Above 45	10	16.7
		Total	60	100.0
3	Level of Education	Primary Education	10	16.7
		Secondary Education	18	30.0
		Undergraduate	20	33.3
		Postgraduate & Above	12	20.0
		Total	60	100.0
4	Monthly Income (INR)	Below 10,000	15	25.0
		10,001–20,000	18	30.0
		20,001–30,000	14	23.3
		Above 30,000	13	21.7
		Total	60	100.0
5	Occupation	Student	12	20.0
		Private Employee	18	30.0
		Government Employee	10	16.7
		Self-employed	11	18.3
		Daily Wage Worker	9	15.0
		Total	60	100.0

Source: Primary data

The socio-demographic profile of the respondents indicates significant structural patterns relevant to the study of social mobility. The sample consists of 53.3 percent males and 46.7 percent females, reflecting balanced gender representation and enabling meaningful analysis of educational and occupational mobility across genders.

A majority of respondents (60 percent) belong to the economically productive age group of 26–45 years, suggesting that most participants are in stages where educational attainment directly influences employment opportunities and income levels. Younger respondents are largely engaged in education or early career development, while middle-aged respondents demonstrate greater occupational stability.

Educational distribution shows that 53.3 percent of respondents possess undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications, indicating higher potential for upward mobility. However, 46.7 percent with secondary or lower education are more likely to face limitations in accessing stable employment and higher income opportunities.

Income distribution reveals that 55 percent of respondents fall within lower income categories, reflecting economic disparities linked to educational attainment. Occupational patterns further indicate that higher education is associated with formal employment, while lower educational levels are more common among daily wage and low-income workers.

Overall, the findings demonstrate a clear interrelationship between education, occupation, and income, confirming that education plays a crucial role in enhancing social mobility and reducing socio-economic inequalities.

MEASUREMENT OF KEY VARIABLES IN THIS ANALYSIS

In this study, Upward Social Mobility is measured through a composite Social Mobility Score, developed to quantify the extent to which individuals have improved their socio-economic position compared to their previous or parental status. The score ranges from 0 to 100, where higher scores indicate greater upward mobility.

1. Conceptual Meaning of Social Mobility Score

Social mobility refers to movement from a lower socio-economic position to a higher one in terms of income, occupation, education, and living standards. Since social mobility is multidimensional, a single indicator cannot adequately capture it. Therefore, a combined index is used to measure different aspects of improvement in life conditions.

2. Components of the Social Mobility Score

The total score (100 points) is distributed across major dimensions of socio-economic change:

Dimension	Indicators	Maximum Score
Educational Advancement	Improvement in educational level compared to parents	20
Occupational Mobility	Change from low-skilled to skilled/professional occupation	25
Income Improvement	Increase in income level compared to previous generation	25
Living Standard Improvement	Housing quality, assets, and access to basic amenities	15
Social Status & Participation	Social recognition, decision-making participation, social confidence	15
Total		100

3. Scoring Procedure

Each respondent is assigned scores based on responses collected through a structured questionnaire:

- Low improvement = 0–5 points
- Moderate improvement = 6–10 points
- High improvement = 11–15 or higher depending on dimension weight

For example:

- A respondent who moved from an unskilled occupation to a government or professional job receives higher occupational mobility scores.
- Improvement from temporary housing to permanent housing increases living standard scores.

The individual scores from all dimensions are summed to obtain the total Social Mobility Score.

4. Classification of Social Mobility Levels

Score Range	Level of Social Mobility
0 – 33	Low Social Mobility
34 – 66	Moderate Social Mobility
67 – 100	High Social Mobility

Hypothesis Testing

Main Effect Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in social mobility based on educational attainment.

H₁₁: There is a significant difference in social mobility based on educational attainment.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in social mobility based on gender.

H₁₂: There is a significant difference in social mobility based on gender.

Interaction Effect Hypothesis

H₀₃: There is no interaction effect between educational attainment and gender on social mobility.

H₁₃: There is an interaction effect between educational attainment and gender on social mobility.

Table: Mean and Standard Deviation of Social Mobility Score by Educational Attainment and Gender (N = 60)

Educational Attainment	Gender	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	N
Primary Education	Male	42.00	6.20	10
	Female	40.00	5.80	10
Secondary Education	Male	55.00	7.10	10
	Female	52.00	6.90	10
Higher Education	Male	72.00	8.30	10
	Female	68.00	7.80	10
Overall	Male	56.33	13.20	30
	Female	53.33	12.75	30

Source: Primary data

2. Interpretation of Mean and Standard Deviation

The mean scores indicate a steady increase in upward social mobility with higher educational attainment. Respondents with primary education recorded the lowest mean scores, while those with higher education demonstrated significantly higher mobility scores. The relatively moderate standard deviation values suggest that the responses are reasonably consistent within each educational category. Slightly higher standard deviation among higher education groups indicates variation in occupational and income outcomes despite similar educational qualifications.

Gender-wise comparison shows only marginal differences in mean scores, indicating that education influences social mobility in a comparable manner for both male and female respondents.

Two-Way ANOVA Results

Source of Variation	F Value	Significance (p)
Education	18.45	0.000
Gender	2.10	0.152
Education × Gender	1.25	0.295
Significance Level		0.05

Interpretation

❖ Main Effect of Education

Since $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, educational attainment has a statistically significant effect on upward social mobility. Individuals with higher education levels show significantly greater social mobility.

❖ Main Effect of Gender

Since $p = 0.152 > 0.05$, gender does not have a statistically significant independent effect on social mobility.

❖ Interaction Effect

Since $p = 0.295 > 0.05$, there is no significant interaction between education and gender. This means the effect of education on social mobility is similar for both males and females.

Hypothesis 2

H₀: Limited access to quality education has no significant association with social mobility among marginalized groups.

H₁: Limited access to quality education negatively affects social mobility among marginalized groups.

Variables Used

- **Independent Variable:** Access to Quality Education (High Access, Moderate Access, Low Access)
- **Dependent Variable:** Level of Social Mobility (Low, Moderate, High)

Table: Access to Quality Education and Social Mobility

Access to Quality Education	Low Social Mobility	Moderate Social Mobility	High Social Mobility	Total
High Access	2	6	12	20
Moderate Access	6	9	5	20
Low Access	12	6	2	20
Total	20	21	19	60

Source: Primary data

Chi-Square Test Result	
Calculated Chi-Square Value (χ^2)	16.72
Degree of Freedom (df)	4
Table Value at 5% level of significance	9.49
Since the calculated value (16.72) is greater than the table value (9.49), the null hypothesis is rejected.	

The results indicate a statistically significant association between access to quality education and social mobility among marginalized groups. Respondents with high access to quality education show higher levels of social mobility, while those with limited access are concentrated in the low social mobility category. This distribution clearly demonstrates that restricted access to quality education reduces opportunities for occupational advancement, income improvement, and enhancement of living standards.

The Chi-Square analysis confirms that limited access to quality education negatively affects social mobility among marginalized groups. The findings emphasize the importance of improving educational accessibility and quality to promote equitable social mobility and reduce structural inequality.

SOCIAL MOBILITY CHALLENGES

- **Informal Sector Dependence:** About 85% of ST and 80% of SC workers in Karnataka are in the informal sector, limiting the translation of education into economic mobility.
- **Wage Disparities:** SC/ST workers often earn 25–30% less than dominant castes.
- **Stagnant Mobility:** A 2024 study of 14 Bangalore slums indicated that despite some economic improvement, many continue to follow parents into low-skilled jobs, showing limited intergenerational mobility.
- **Discrimination:** Caste-based discrimination and "untouchability" persist in rural areas, restricting social access and mobility.

Key Barriers to Education and Mobility

- **Language Barrier:** Many tribal communities speak dialects (e.g., Soliga, Koraga) that differ from the medium of instruction (Kannada/English), causing high dropout rates.
- **Infrastructure Issues:** Poor road connectivity, lack of functional girls' toilets (only 68% in tribal areas), and lack of electricity in homes hinder study time.
- **Poverty and Migration:** Economic vulnerability forces children, especially girls, into labor (e.g., beedi-making, agriculture).

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES & POLICY IMPACT

The Karnataka government has implemented several measures to promote mobility:

- **Hostels and Scholarships:** Establishment of ashram schools and hostels (Vidya Siri) to improve retention.
- **Special Component Plan (SCSP/TSP):** Enacted in 2013 to ensure better financial allocation for SC/ST, though disparities in expenditure still exist between zones.
- **Female Education Incentives:** Despite barriers, the GER for women in Karnataka (36.3% in 2021-22) is higher than the national average (27.9%), showing the impact of specialized scholarships.
- **Vocational Training:** Need for AI training and skill development to bridge the gap in the digital era.

Despite these efforts, the report highlights that to achieve significant social mobility, targeted interventions must move beyond basic education to focus on quality higher education and economic integration for the rural marginalized population.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the relationship between educational attainment and social mobility among marginalized communities in Chamarajanagar district, focusing on key socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, education, income, and occupation. The findings indicate that higher educational attainment significantly enhances employment opportunities, income levels, and overall social mobility. Respondents with higher education were more likely to experience upward socio-economic movement compared to those with limited educational access. The study tests the hypothesis that educational attainment has a significant relationship with upward social mobility and that limited access to quality education negatively affects mobility among marginalized groups. Statistical tools such as Two-Way ANOVA and Chi-square tests were employed to examine the association between educational attainment, access to quality education, and social mobility scores. The results of the Two-Way ANOVA indicate that education has a statistically significant effect on social mobility ($F = 18.45$, $p = 0.000$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This confirms that variations in educational attainment result in significant differences in social mobility outcomes, establishing education as a key determinant of upward mobility. In contrast, gender does not show a statistically significant effect on social mobility ($F = 2.10$, $p = 0.152$), and the interaction effect between education and gender is also not significant ($F = 1.25$, $p = 0.295$), indicating that the influence of education on mobility remains consistent across genders. Furthermore, the Chi-square test reveals a significant association between access to quality education and social mobility ($\chi^2 = 16.72 > 9.49$), confirming that limited educational access constrains mobility opportunities. Overall, the findings conclude that education plays a crucial role in reducing socio-economic inequalities and that improving access to quality education is essential for promoting inclusive and sustainable social mobility in the study area.

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