

Inter-Generational Educational Mobility in Selected Tea Gardens of District Darjeeling: A Socioeconomic Perspective Arpana Chettri & Dr. Meenu Gangal

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the intergenerational educational mobility among tea garden communities in Darjeeling, with a specific focus on the role of socioeconomic status (SES). Using the Kuppuswamy scale as a framework, data were collected from generations within the selected households of Belgachi tea garden: the present head of the family, their parents and their children. The findings reveal patterns of upward and stagnant educational mobility across generations, highlighting how parental education and occupational status strongly influence children's educational attainment. Despite modest improvements, systemic barriers – such as economic precarity, lack of institutional support, and limited access to quality schooling – continue to restrict substantial mobility. The analysis suggests that while certain families demonstrate resilience and progress, the overall pace of educational advancement remains slow, reflecting broader structural inequalities embedded within the tea plantation economy. The study underscores the need for policy interventions that bridge generational gaps and foster equitable opportunities in marginalised communities.

KEYWORDS: Intergenerational mobility, Socio-economic status, Tea Garden communities, educational attainment, Kuppuswamy scale.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the key that unlocks human potential by enriching innate qualities with wisdom. The development level of any society can be determined by the literacy rate of its people. Education equips individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for economic success, promotes social mobility, and uplifts society as a whole. In India, the concept of education has historically been deeply rooted in ancient scriptures and philosophies, such as the Vedas and Upanishads. The Gurukul system, an old model of education in ancient India, emphasised the holistic development of students—mentally, cognitively, physically, and spiritually. However, repeated foreign invasions and colonial rule significantly disrupted India's traditional education system.

Since independence, the Government of India has implemented various policies aimed at improving literacy rates. As a result, literacy has increased from approximately 12% in 1947 to 76.32% in 2022, with notable progress among both genders. However, despite these improvements, rural and marginalized communities continue to face educational challenges that require continuous evaluation and intervention.

One such marginalized group is tea garden workers, a population that remains economically and socially disadvantaged. India has 1,585 established tea gardens, with 283 in North Bengal and 87 in the Darjeeling district alone, employing around 100,000 permanent and temporary workers (exact figure is not available). Tea garden workers, particularly in the Terai region, face significant educational and economic challenges, including low educational attainment, poor living conditions, and limited occupational mobility. The cycle of low socioeconomic status (SES) and limited educational opportunities often persists across generations, affecting children's ability to achieve upward mobility. While some families are striving to provide better education for their children, broader structural barriers continue to hinder progress.

1.1. Intergenerational Educational Mobility and Socioeconomic Barriers

Intergenerational educational mobility is an essential measure for assessing whether children of tea garden workers can achieve higher education levels than their parents, thereby improving their economic prospects. This mobility is often restricted by structural barriers, such as:

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Financial Constraints – Low wages and job insecurity among tea garden workers often prevent families from investing in their children's education.

Access to Quality Schools – Many rural areas lack well-equipped schools and experienced teachers. Government policies like scholarships and mid-day meal programs have attempted to address these gaps, but disparities persist.

Cultural and Social Norms – Societal expectations, including early marriage and gender discrimination, contribute to downward educational mobility, particularly for girls.

Parental Involvement – Parents play a crucial role in shaping children's educational aspirations. However, many tea garden workers, due to low literacy levels and demanding work schedules, struggle to support their children's learning.

Geographical Limitations – Remote locations, poor transportation, and climate-related disruptions (e.g., landslides, floods) make school access difficult, further limiting educational attainment.

Individual Aspirations and Effort – While some children demonstrate intrinsic motivation and high ambition, systemic barriers often prevent them from reaching their full academic potential.

1.2. Operational concept of the study

Intergenerational educational mobility: In this study, intergenerational educational mobility refers to the change in educational attainment between parents and their children within tea garden worker families. It is assessed by comparing the highest level of education achieved by parents and their children to determine whether upward, downward or stagnant mobility exists.

Socio-economic status: Socio-economic status represents the economic and social standing of tea garden workers, determined by income, education level, and occupation. This study measures socioeconomic status using the Kuppuswamy scale, which categorizes individuals into different socioeconomic classes based on the above-mentioned three factors.

Tea Plantation: A tea plantation refers to large-scale agricultural estates where tea is cultivated, processed, and produced for commercial purposes. In this study it specifically relates to tea estates in Darjeeling and surrounding areas, where workers are engaged in tea production under varying labour conditions.

Tea garden workers: Tea Garden workers are labourers employed in tea plantations, primarily involved in plucking, processing, and packing tea leaves. This study focuses on tea garden workers in Darjeeling, examining their socio-economic conditions and access to education for their children.

Kuppuswamy Scale: Kuppuswamy Scale is a socio-economic classification tool used to measure an individual's SES based on education, occupation and monthly income. In this study, it will be applied to classify tea garden workers into different socio-economic categories and analyse its impact on their children's education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of the research, "Intergenerational educational mobility in tea garden communities: A socio-economic perspective" is to explore the impact of parents' socioeconomic status on intergenerational educational mobility in tea garden communities, and the following literature was referred to:

The history of education in Darjeeling can be traced back to the British colonial period, during which missionary schools were established and later expanded to include native students. By 1872, three schools were set up specifically for the children of tea plantation workers in Soom, Tukvar, and Lebong (Dewan, 1991). In his book *Education in the Darjeeling Hills: A Historical Survey (1835–1985)*, Dewan (1991) emphasizes that the foundation of education in Darjeeling was laid early on. However, the rapid expansion of tea plantations and the need for family labour created barriers to education—challenges that persist even today.

Tea plantations function not only as economic units but also as social ecosystems where employment is primarily family-based, allowing plantation owners to benefit from inexpensive labour. Within tea gardens, occupations are often passed down through kinship rather than an open job market, which limits opportunities for the next generation to pursue higher education. The Plantation Labour Act of 1951, under Section 14, mandates educational provisions for children between six and twelve years old, ensuring elementary-level education. However, due to the long distances students must travel for secondary education, dropout rates remain significantly high (Pradhan, 2021).

Several studies emphasise the strong connection between socioeconomic status and educational access for tea garden workers, highlighting the need for further research. Sarkar et al. (2016) found that women working in tea gardens face socioeconomic, cultural, and educational disadvantages, often engaging in labour solely to sustain their families. Similarly, Ruma and Nath (2014) identified a direct relationship between poor educational attainment among tea garden workers and their socioeconomic and cultural conditions. Factors such as livelihood opportunities, living standards, nutrition, health conditions, and awareness of rights and responsibilities significantly influence their well-being.

Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach, including improving housing conditions, ensuring fair wages, strengthening occupational health and safety measures, enhancing healthcare access, expanding educational opportunities, and fostering social integration. These efforts are crucial for enhancing the quality of life for tea garden workers. Anand and Sengupta

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(2023) suggest that by tackling these systemic issues, the tea plantation industry in Darjeeling, West Bengal, can move toward a more equitable and sustainable model that prioritizes the dignity and well-being of its workforce.

Intergenerational educational mobility refers to the extent to which children achieve higher education levels compared to their parents. Kishan and Rajverma (2024) examined the nonlinear relationship between educational outcomes across successive generations using quantile regression. The stratification within India's education system is evident in the disparity between elite private schools, well-funded public schools, and under-resourced government schools, which creates a tiered system that influences students' academic and career trajectories. Urban areas generally show higher educational attainment compared to rural regions. However, previous studies have largely focused on educational mobility, leaving other socioeconomic dimensions unexplored, necessitating further research into intergenerational mobility from multiple perspectives.

While numerous studies have investigated educational attainment, government policies, and the challenges faced by tea garden workers, research specifically addressing educational mobility from a socioeconomic perspective remains limited. Lepcha and Ankura (2024), in their study on the socioeconomic conditions of tea garden workers in Phoobsering Tea Estate, Darjeeling, found that limited education and skill development prevent women from earning salaries equal to their male counterparts, impacting their quality of life. Age, gender, and education levels significantly affect wages, with educated workers more likely to attain management roles and higher salaries.

Similarly, Rai (2022), in her thesis, found that Darjeeling lacked proper government school facilities, leading many tea garden workers to enrol their children in private schools instead. However, financial constraints and the absence of support from authorities to utilise the Tea Board education schemes made this option difficult. Although school facilities existed earlier, frequent dropout rates persisted, especially among lower-income families, due to financial difficulties.

The available literature indicates that multiple factors influence educational mobility in tea garden communities. While issues like poor living conditions and wage-related agitations have been widely studied, research specifically addressing the relationship between socioeconomic status and intergenerational educational mobility remains scarce.

3. RESEARCH FOCUS/ STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

Given these challenges, this study aims to examine the relationship between parents' socioeconomic status (SES) and their children's educational attainment among tea garden workers, using the Kuppuswamy scale as a framework. The research will analyse whether children from low-SES families are able to break the cycle of educational disadvantage or remain trapped in a generational loop of poverty and limited opportunities.

By identifying the key SES factors influencing education, this study seeks to contribute to policy discussions and recommend targeted interventions to improve educational mobility in tea garden communities.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION

How does parent's socioeconomic status (SES) impact the educational attainment of children in tea garden communities?

5. Objectives

- i. To examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and intergenerational educational mobility among tea garden workers in Darjeeling using the Kuppuswamy scale.
- ii. To identify key socio-economic barriers (e.g. income, occupation, education) affecting children's access to quality education.
- iii. To examine the role of parental involvement and aspirations in shaping children's educational outcomes.
- iv. To assess the impact of school accessibility, government policies, and cultural norms on intergenerational educational mobility.
- v. To recommend policy interventions that could enhance educational opportunities for children from tea garden worker families.

6. DATA-BASED AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection: Data is collected through structured surveys and interviews using self self-made questionnaire, with three generations within each household: the present head of the family, their father and their children. In the Darjeeling District, there are 87 tea gardens, and for the study Belgachi Tea Garden of the Naxalbari block is selected.

Data Analysis and Findings: This section presents the findings derived from the primary data collected from the Belgachi Tea garden and interprets them through the lens of intergenerational educational mobility. The analysis is structured in alignment with the key variables identified in the study.

Sampling method: The study adopts a random sampling method to ensure representation across tea garden communities, as stratification is not feasible in this setting. 400 households were surveyed using a structured self-made questionnaire.

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Research design: This study employs a correlational quantitative research design to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and educational outcome in tea garden communities. A descriptive quantitative approach is also integrated to provide an overview of educational access and disparities within the study population. The research is designed to identify patterns and associations between socioeconomic status and education, without manipulating any variables. The independent variable (SES) is measured using the Kuppuswamy scale, which categorizes participants based on income, occupation and education levels. The dependent variable (Educational attainment) is assessed based on school attendance, dropout rates, and the highest level of education attained.

Data analysis: The findings are analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, percentage distributions), correlational analysis (Pearson’s correlation) and intergenerational educational mobility (Chi-square test).

7. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

7.1. Socioeconomic classification of tea garden workers (Kuppuswamy scale)

Using the updated Kuppuswamy scale, respondents were classified based on three parameters: education, occupation and income. The classification revealed that the majority of families fall under the lower or lower-middle socioeconomic class, primarily their occupation is either as unskilled or semi-skilled tea garden workers, the education level of the head of the family is mostly illiterate or educated up to primary level, and the monthly household income is mostly between Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 12,000.

Table 1: Level of Education of the head of the family

Sl. No	Kuppuswamy scale (Education of the head)	Score	Descriptions of the variables of the study
1	Professional degree	7	-
2	Graduate or Postgraduate	6	Graduation
3	Intermediate/ diploma	5	High Secondary
4	High School	4	Secondary
5	Middle School	3	-
6	Primary School	2	Primary
7	Illiterate	1	Non-Formal Education

Source: Calculated by Authors

Table 2. Occupation of head of family

Sl. No	Kuppuswamy scale (Occupation of head of family)	Score	Descriptions of the variables of the study
1	Professional	10	
2	Semi professional	6	
3	Clerical/shop/farm	5	Clerical
4	Skill worker	4	Self Employed
5	Semiskilled worker	3	Supervisor, factory
6	Unskilled worker	2	Tea Garden Worker
7	Unemployed	1	Unemployment

Source: Calculated by Authors

Table 3. Monthly family income in Rs (2021)

Sl. No	Kuppuswamy scale (Updated monthly family income in Rs. 2021)	Score	Descriptions of the variables of the study
1	123322 and above	12	
2	61663-123321	10	
3	46129-61662	6	
4	30831-46128	4	
5	18497-30830	3	

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6	6175-18496	2	7000, 8000, 8500, 12000, 13000, 14000, 17000, 18000
7	Below and 6174	1	3000, 4000, 5000, 6000

Source: Calculated by Authors

Table 4. Kuppuswamy socio-economic status scale 2021

Sl. No.	Score	Socioeconomic class	Frequency	Percentage
1	26-29	Upper	0	0
2	16-25	Upper Middle	0	0
3	11-15	Lower Middle	10	2.5
4	5-10	Upper Lower	311	77.75
5	<5	Lower	79	19.75

Source: Calculated by Authors

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of the SES based on the Kuppuswamy scale

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Kuppuswamy socio-economic	400	6.225	1.877014	3	11

Source: Calculated by Authors

These findings indicate that the tea garden workers remain economically vulnerable with limited access to resources. Their socioeconomic status is a critical factor influencing their children’s education.

7.2. Education levels between parents vs. children (Intergenerational mobility)

Table 6. Education levels between parents vs. children (Intergenerational mobility)

Level of Education	Respondent Father	Respondent education	Change	Respondent education	Respondent son	Change
Non-formal education	364	109	-255	109	0	-109
Primary	25	119	94	119	193	74
Secondary	9	134	125	134	93	-41
High Secondary	2	32	30	32	48	16
Graduation	0	6	6	6	23	17

Source: Prepared by Researcher; Primary Field Survey 2025

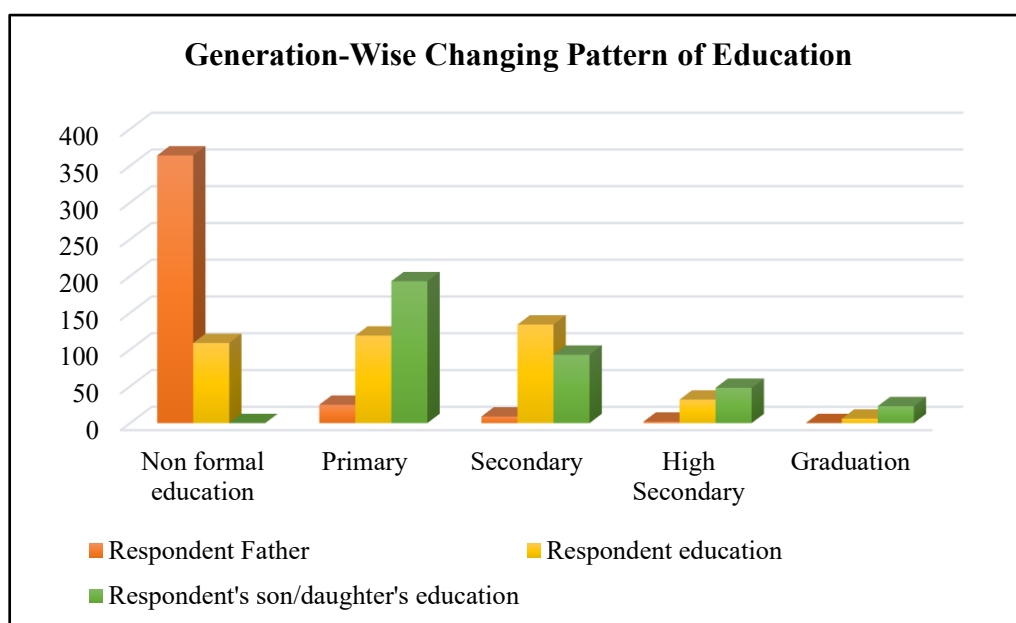


Figure 1. Generation-wise changing pattern of education

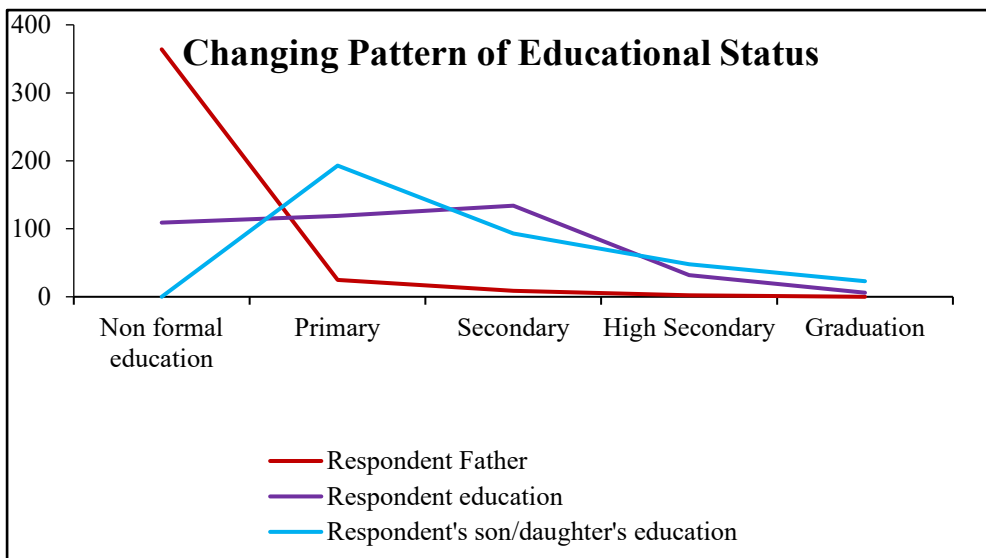


Figure 2. Changing pattern of educational status

A three-generation comparison was made between grandparents, parents (respondents) and children (respondents' children). **Grandparents:** mostly illiterate or primary pass, **Parents:** predominantly upper primary and secondary level and **Children:** An increased number in higher secondary and some are graduates.

Mobility matrix shows:

Non-formal education shows a sharp decline across generations, primary level sees a steady rise, especially for children, secondary education peaked among respondents but slightly dropped for children, higher secondary and graduation level reflect a positive educational mobility trend.

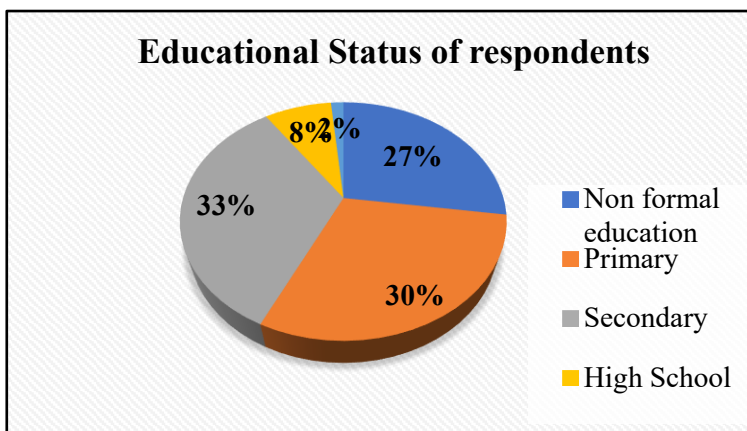


Fig. 3 Educational status of respondent

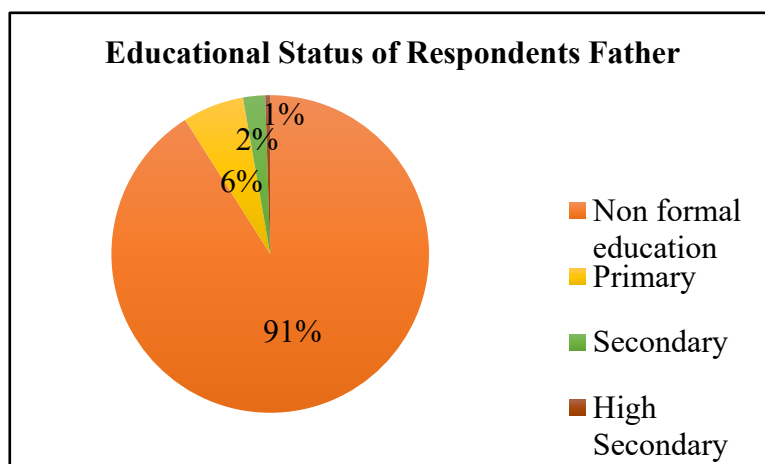


Fig. 4 Educational status of respondents' fathers

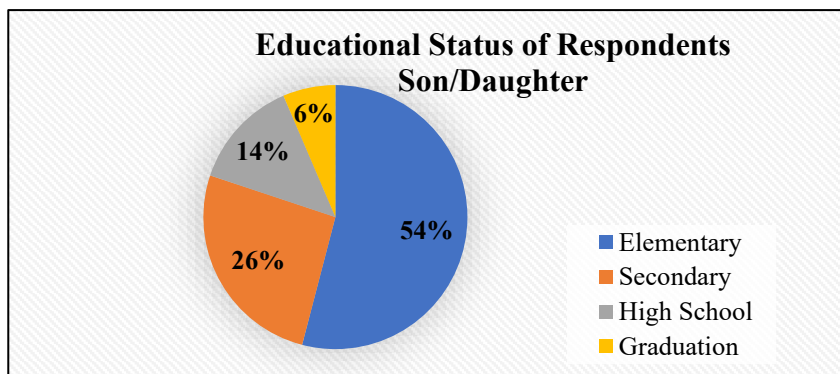


Fig 5. Educational status of son/daughter

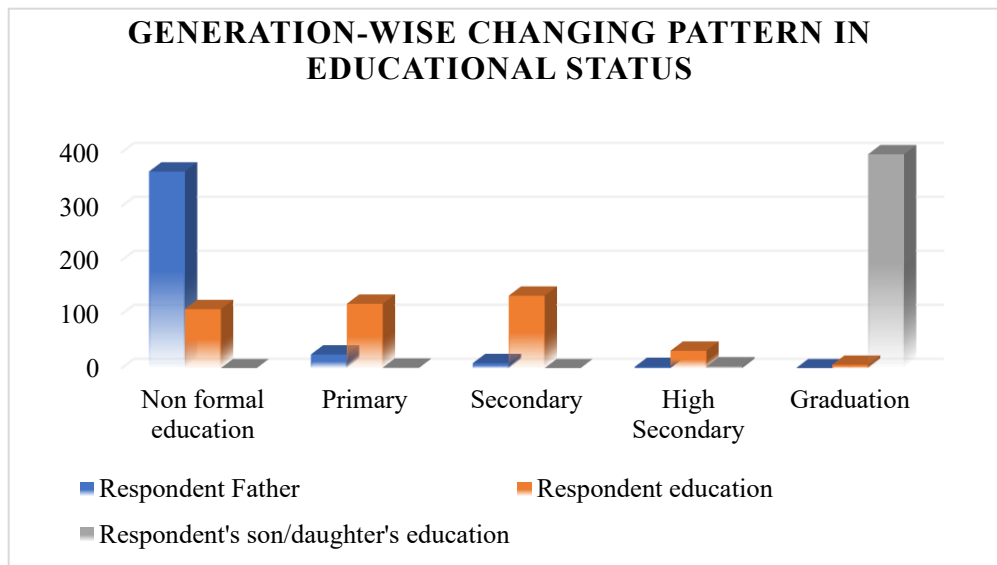


Fig. 6. Generation-wise changing pattern in educational status

There is visible upward mobility, but it is dependent on the educational status of parents. True upward mobility (illiterate parent to graduate child) is limited, signalling deep-rooted structural challenges.

7.3. Barriers to educational advancement

While surveying, observing and discussing the matters related to education, respondents highlighted multiple barriers to the researcher, such as

Economic constraints: as the income is limited hence the expenses on education have affected the educational attainment to a great extent.

Lack of awareness and motivation among parents: The study found that parents are still reluctant to have higher education for their children, and this is due to a lack of awareness of the importance of education.

Distance to secondary and higher secondary schools.

Irregular attendance due to domestic / labour work: Due to financial constraints and working parents, children are engaged in domestic chores or work as daily wage labour.

Early marriage in some cases, especially for girls: Researchers observed that girls are least motivated to pursue higher education as they are influenced by social media and their environment. For them, settling early is better than futile higher education.

These findings reinforce that non-academic and structural barriers are significantly responsible for slowing down or halting educational progress despite available schooling options.

7.4. Role of government and private institutions in education

Available government schools are either under-resourced or lack qualified teachers. The existing schools are lagging behind in fulfilling the demand of the present time. Teachers are mostly undertrained for motivating students to turn up for school. In the vicinity, many private schools exist; however, they are very expensive for the tea garden workers and are rarely affordable for them. NGO support is limited in presence but plays a positive role in a few pockets. Despite the presence of government schemes, e.g. mid-day meal, free textbooks, free uniform, stipend, etc, implementation is inconsistent and quality is compromised. There is a need for targeted policy interventions that bridge this institutional gap and focus on inclusion.

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7.5. Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationship between parental socioeconomic characteristics and children’s educational outcomes, a Pearson correlation test was conducted. The Pearson correlation coefficient [r] was calculated to measure the strength and direction of association between variables such as parental education, income, household size and children’s educational indicators.

Variables	Age of respondents	Gender	Caste	Household size	Marital status	Education	Occupation	Monthly income	Additional income	Child school attend	Child education	Improve education	Child achieved education
Age of respondents	1												
Gender	0.2594*	1											
	0.000												
Caste	-0.0522	0.0084	1										
P value	0.2974	0.8666											
Household size	0.1464*	-0.2120*	-0.0852	1									
P value	0.0033	0.0000	0.0887										
Marital status	0.3019*	0.7824*	-0.0124	-0.2520*	1								
P value	0.000	0.0000	0.8043	0.000									
Education	-0.4737*	-0.3520*	-0.0608	0.0683	-0.3493*	1							
P value	0.000	0.0000	0.2248	0.1729	0.0000								
Occupation	-0.1126*	-0.1076*	-0.1653*	0.0219	-0.1031*	0.3214*	1						
P value	0.0243	0.0314	0.0009	0.6631	0.0392	0.000							
Monthly income	0.0522	-0.1282*	-0.1355*	0.6213*	-0.1738*	0.1002*	0.2101*	1					
P value	0.2976	0.0103	0.0066	0.000	0.0005	0.0452	0.000						
Additional income	-0.0239	-0.0201	0.0147	0.0349	-0.0202	0.0368	0.1527*	0.1491*	1				
P value	0.6332	0.675	0.7688	0.4861	0.6878	0.4625	0.0022	0.0028					
Child school attend	-0.3440*	-0.1677*	0.0836	-0.0693	-0.2179*	0.2235*	0.0873	0.0124	-0.0797	1			

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P value	0.000	0.0008	0.095	0.1664	0.000	0.000	0.0811	0.8051	0.1117				
Child education	0.3944*	0.1866*	-0.1254*	0.042	0.1867*	-0.1480*	-0.0426	0.0145	0.0159	-0.1984*	1		
P value	0.000	0.0004	0.0177	0.4293	0.0004	0.0051	0.422	0.7849	0.7648	0.0002			
Improve education	0.1191*	0.0328	0.0781	0.0164	-0.0158	-0.0705	0.0451	-0.0335	0.0088	-0.0346	0.0677	1	
P value	0.0172	0.5126	0.1187	0.7434	0.7527	0.1592	0.3688	0.504	0.8607	0.4904	0.202		
Child achieved education	-0.1134*	0.0399	-0.0279	0.0419	0.0102	0.1018*	0.0871	0.0701	0.0048	-0.0526	-0.0026	-0.0167	1
P value	0.0233	0.4265	0.5773	0.4033	0.8394	0.0419	0.082	0.1616	0.9245	0.294	0.9615	0.7393	

*Indicated 95% significance level 0.05

Source: Field Survey 2025

A weak but statistically positive correlation was found between parents’ education and children’s educational attainment ($r=0.1018$, $p=0.0419$). A moderate correlation was observed between parental education and the child’s current level of education ($r=0.3944$, $p=0.000$). Monthly income showed weak but significant correlation with child school attendance ($r=0.1491$, $p=0.0028$). While some correlations were weak, the significant associations suggest that parental education and income play a small but meaningful role in influencing children’s education in tea garden communities.

7.6. Socioeconomic Status and Mobility

Using the Kuppuswamy scale, families were categorised into lower, lower-middle and middle SES groups. Educational mobility patterns differ significantly across these categories.

Lower SES: Majority stuck in the same educational level or just one level up.

Lower – Middle SES: Slight improvement in children reaching higher secondary.

Middle SES: Most children are achieving higher secondary or graduation.

Educational mobility is positively influenced by socioeconomic status. Children from relatively better-off families in tea garden areas are more likely to experience upward mobility, suggesting that poverty and limited resources are key inhibitors.

There is slow but steady upward educational mobility across generations. Parental education significantly impacts children’s educational attainment. Socioeconomic barriers play a major role in limiting educational mobility. Gender does not appear to significantly affect mobility in the studied context.

8. DISCUSSION

This section critically examines the findings of the study and situates them within broader educational and social contexts. It also draws comparisons with existing literature to highlight the relevance and uniqueness of the study.

The study reveals that intergenerational educational mobility within tea garden communities is present but limited, and largely influenced by parental education and socioeconomic status.

Slow upward mobility: While there is a gradual rise in educational attainment from grandparents to children, the pace of change is slow and uneven. The leap from primary to higher secondary or graduation remains uncommon among children whose illiterate parents are, suggesting that deep-rooted systemic barriers hinder educational advancement.

Role of parental education: The correlation between father’s and child’s education was found to be weak ($r=0.026$), indicating that father’s education alone does not strongly predict children’s education outcomes. However, when both parents’ education was considered, a moderate correlation ($r=0.3944$) was found, suggesting that a more educated household environment plays a stronger role in shaping children’s academic progress.

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Role of income: A weak but statistically significant relationship was found between monthly income and school attendance ($r=0.1491$), indicating that financial stability helps maintain regular school participation, even if it doesn't guarantee academic success.

Barriers remain deep: Despite government schooling and policy efforts, economic hardship, lack of motivation, and infrastructural gaps continue to serve as serious barriers to educational advancement. Early school dropouts and child labour, though not officially acknowledged, are still present in subtle forms.

Institutional gaps: Government institutions, though accessible, are often poorly equipped or underperforming. While private schools offer better services, they remain out of reach for most tea garden families, further widening the educational divide.

Positive signs: The minimal gender disparity observed is a hopeful indicator, pointing towards a gender equitable mindset in the region. It offers a foundation for further policy development that focuses more on economic and structural barriers than on cultural ones.

8.1. Comparison with previous research

This study aligns with and adds to the growing body of research on educational mobility in marginalised communities. Several studies have pointed out the interplay of socioeconomic background and educational access. Desai and Kulkarni (2008) found that in India, intergenerational mobility is limited among lower caste and labour-intensive populations, supporting this study's findings on stagnancy in tea garden communities. Nambissan (2010) emphasized how marginalised children face institutional neglect and low-quality schooling, mirroring this study's insight into the role of poorly managed government institutions in tea garden areas. In contrast, Beteille (2009) found that educational aspirations in rural India are increasing, especially among girls. This study supports that trend, particularly the observation of no significant gender disparity in the Darjeeling hills. What makes this study unique is its focus on the tea garden workers of Darjeeling, a population often excluded from mainstream education policy discourse. By incorporating three-generation data, this research provides a deeper, layered understanding of mobility – capturing both progress and persistence of inequality.

9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section highlights how the findings of the study can guide policy makers, educators and stakeholders in designing effective interventions to promote intergenerational educational mobility among tea garden communities.

9.1. Policy implication

This study reveals that children of illiterate or semi-literate parents are less likely to access higher education. This shows a clear gap in opportunity and highlights the need for targeted policies that address deep-rooted educational disadvantages. Since children of educated parents are more likely to succeed, policies must focus on adult education, especially for women, to build a culture of learning within households. Poverty, lack of transport, and child labour continue to obstruct children's education. Therefore, policy must treat education and poverty together and not separately. Low teacher accountability, poor infrastructure and the absence of career guidance in government schools reduce educational outcomes. Monitoring and quality enhancement of government schools is a policy necessity. The absence of significant gender disparity in the region is a strength. Policies can now focus on universal access, knowing that girls are equally willing and capable.

9.2. Recommendation

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations can be proposed:

- i. **Strengthen parental and adult education**
 - ❖ Launch literacy and parenting workshops in tea garden areas
 - ❖ Collaborate with NGOs to build educational awareness campaigns among adult workers.
- ii. **Provide direct educational support to children**
 - ❖ Offer transport assistance, uniforms, and stationery to reduce dropout rates
 - ❖ Create local learning hubs with after-school tutoring and mentorships
- iii. **Improve quality and accountability in government schools**
 - ❖ Regular teacher audits, surprise inspections, and community-led school management communities
 - ❖ Incentive teachers to work in rural and tea garden areas with hardship allowances
- iv. **Introduce local scholarship schemes**
 - ❖ Special scholarships for first-generation learners from tea gardens
 - ❖ Tie these to attendance and performance to keep children motivated
- v. **Integrate career guidance and vocational training**
 - ❖ From upper primary onwards, children should be exposed to career awareness and skill-based learning relevant to their socio-economic contexts
- vi. **Strengthen existing government schemes**

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- ❖ Ensure efficient implementation of existing schemes, e.g., mid-day meal, free stationery, uniforms, umbrella, bicycle for girls, etc
- ❖ Create a feedback loop where communities can report scheme failures.

Improving educational mobility in tea garden communities is not just an educational goal – it is a social justice imperative. A policy shift toward inclusive, context- and community-empowered models can transform stagnant cycles into stories of upward progress.

10. CONCLUSION

This study explored the patterns of intergenerational educational mobility among tea garden communities, focusing on the relationships between socioeconomic status, parental education and children's educational attainment.

Through detailed data collection from 400 households, the study found that while there is evidence of upward mobility, the progress is uneven and slow. The majority of families remain in a cycle where low parental education and poverty directly impact the educational outcome of children. A very weak correlation between father's and child's education ($r=0.026$) reflects the limited influence of parental education alone in driving children's academic success. However, a more promising pattern emerged when both parents' education was considered ($r=0.3944$), highlighting the importance of a literate home environment in fostering upward mobility.

The study also found that household income, although not a dominant factor, plays a supportive role in school attendance ($r=0.1491$), suggesting that even marginal financial improvement can reduce school absenteeism.

These findings emphasise that no single factor determines educational mobility; rather, a combination of parental literacy, economic stability and accessible quality schooling is essential. As mobility is slow and barriers remain entrenched, multi-layered interventions – including financial aid, parental awareness programs and improved infrastructure are needed to accelerate intergenerational change in education.

The study concludes that structural interventions are urgently needed. These must focus not only on access to schools but also on quality, relevance, and community involvement. Education in tea gardens should not be seen as a charity but a right, and policies must be framed to bridge generational gaps and build lasting educational empowerment.

11. FUTURE RESEARCH PROSPECT

While this study provides meaningful insights into intergenerational educational mobility within tea garden communities, several areas remain open for deeper exploration. Future research could: Expand sample diversity by including various communities like tribal, non – tribal, tea garden workers and non-tea garden workers, busy communities, etc., to draw regional comparisons in mobility trends. Include gender analysis, exploring how mobility differs for sons and daughters within patriarchal and matriarchal households, if any. Examine school-level factors, such as teachers' qualifications, school distance and learning environments, in influencing children's educational attainment. Explore psychological dimensions, such as motivation level, self-esteem and aspirations among first-generation learners. Conduct longitudinal studies tracking children over time to assess how education translates into employment and life outcomes, also if they can break the cycle of poverty and low socioeconomic status. By extending research in these directions, future scholars can offer more nuanced intersectional and policy-relevant insights to uplift marginalised educational landscapes.

12. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since the study involves human participants (tea garden workers and their families), to ensure fairness, transparency and protection of the participants, the following ethical aspects are considered.

- i. Participants are clearly informed of the purpose of the study.
- ii. Respondent details are kept anonymous.
- iii. To ensure their psychological, emotional and social well-being, sensitive questions are avoided.
- iv. The data will be used solely for academic purposes.

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