

Educational Attainment for Sustainable Livelihood: Challenges before Marginalized Society of Sugarcane-Cutters in Maharashtra (India)

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Abstract:

Illiteracy is an important and growing issue among Indian sugarcane cutters particularly in the state of Maharashtra. The present study is focusing on people who are not aware of their rights. They just know to work hard! Need to come up and minimize the gap between skilled and unskilled workers. These people are migrating from the Marathwada region towards western Maharashtra (especially Kolhapur) in search of work for livelihood i.e., sugarcane cutting, sugarcane transport towards the particular factory, and allied activities. The purpose of this research is to investigate the literacy rates, the role of sugar schools, and educational attainment among sugarcane cutters and highlight how it affects while making personality for sustainable development. The study focuses on the unconsciousness regarding their rights and possibilities as well as research is taking efforts for making them better individuals and also tries to push them to come up and meet the new world with new opportunities. Using the cross-sectional analysis, this study analysed the literacy rate of workers in 2013-14 and measured these results against a similar study conducted in 2018-19. The proximity of workers in the study region was found to play the greatest role in not taking education resulting in the highest illiteracy and abridged skilled employment. This research definitively answers the question concerning the correlation between unemployment and illiteracy and the solutions for the transmission of unskilled workers to skilled personalities. To solve the educational problem of these workers, to reduce school dropouts Maharashtra Government started Sugar Schools for such children but it is ineffective, still, the children of sugarcane cutters are not continuing their schools. Therefore, further studies are needed to establish causal relationships and develop preventative measures to eradicate all problems related to improving the educational system at the policy level i.e., fundamentally social as well as cultural.

Keywords: Livelihood, Opportunities, Migration, Sugar Schools, Unskilled Labours, Attainment, Analysis, Drought-prone, Seasonal Migration, Sugar Factory

Introduction:

Sugar cane is an important commercial crop of the state of Maharashtra because of the affluent availability of water. Water ease of western Maharashtra boost

sugarcane harvesting and attracts many people for various kinds of works related to sugarcane cutting. Due to the expected outcomes in the form of money, many people having sufficient agriculture invested in sugarcane harvesting. As we know sugarcane is a very important commercial crop in the state of Maharashtra. This industry also supports two important industries i.e., Jaggery and Khandsari. The sugar industry also produces various other products by-products like bagasse used in paper production, and molasses used in the production of alcohol, plastic, synthetic fibres chemical industries, etc. Bagasse is also utilized as a fuel in the boilers.

Along with the local people of western Maharashtra, many workers are working in the sugarcane factories. And most importantly the Marathwada Region which is also known as a drought-prone area, people from this region attracts to western Maharashtra in search of work. Most of the people are having sufficient land but due to scarcity of water, they are unable to harvest anything there.

Marathwada is the drought-prone and backward region of Maharashtra and from this region, people migrate towards western Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, and other parts of our country too. (Kale & Shinde, 2015)

This is the main reason they leave their places for four to six months and come to Eastern Maharashtra. Due to migration sugarcane cutters get some money for their survival but as a citizen of India are they developing themselves or their children for the rise in the standard of living? Would they become able to focus on their child's education or they are lagging somewhere? The present stud focuses on the levels of educational attainment and literacy among sugarcane cutters, their children migrating from central Maharashtra to Chh. Shahu Cooperative Sugar Factory, Kagal, Kolhapur District.

Aim of the Research:

The present study is focusing on people who don't aware of their rights. They just know to work hard as possible they can. Need to come up, need to minimize the gap between skilled and unskilled laborers. These people are also known as sugarcane cutters, migrating from Eastern Maharashtra, especially, Beed, Osmanabad, Ahmednagar towards western Maharashtra in search of jobs like opportunities in the form of sugarcane cutting, sugarcane transport towards the particular factory, and allied activities. These people are known as sugarcane cutters, doing preferably unskilled work of cutting sugarcanes because of their illiteracy and awareness about themselves. The study highlights their unconsciousness towards making themselves eligible to have all the facilities, amenities and making themselves a better individual. The study also tries to push them to come up and meet the new world with new opportunities.

More than 70 percent of people are migrating from the Beed district of Maharashtra. The same district is having near about five lakhs sugarcane cutters repeatedly migrating to western Maharashtra, as well as other states of India like Karnataka, Gujarat, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh during the harvesting season of sugarcane. These people suffering from very poor economic conditions. In such cases, it

becomes completely impossible for them to sustain their livelihood with their families. That is the main reason why people from the Marathwada region (Central Maharashtra) are migrating elsewhere in search of work for their survival. Especially in the Kolhapur District of Maharashtra. This research work is a case study of Chh. Shahu Co-operative Sugar Factory, Kagal, Dist: Kolhapur. Disclosed that the struggling phase has not changed in the last five decades. The study highlights the impact of migration on their education. With the continuous migration to cut sugarcane and get money, (as they travel for that with their whole family) with these workers their families are also facing the education gap. On another side, we are busy with nation-building and overall development. So, in that case, the particular society is lagging in education which is not good for the overall development of India or any country in the world. The research highlights how sugarcane production is very important in the world. And how the problems arise with this important industry. How people are suffering! How we unintentionally ignored them! How to pull them back to the mainstream! The current study focuses on the present literacy levels, the role of sugar schools, the role of parents regarding taking education, and finally the solutions to dissolve the problems.

Objectives:

1. To find out the literacy and educational attainment towards personality making for sustainable development
2. Role of Sugar Schools (Sakhar Shala) towards continuing education.

Material and Methodology:

In the present research work, the cross-sectional mixed-methods design is used to assess illiteracy, literacy, and sugar school status. The present study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. To achieve the objectives of the study, the necessary primary data is collected from the workers of the Chh. Shahu Cooperative Sugar Factory, Kagal, Dist.: Kolhapur (Maharashtra). The primary data is collected through a questionnaire, which has been designed to identify the actual educational status of workers. The intensive Fieldwork method of interview, personal observation, and informal interviews with their leaders, meetings with the heads of the households were arranged to get authentic data. The necessary secondary data is archived from Factory Annual Report, Agriculture report, Government reports, topic related published reviews, Statistical Abstracts, Kolhapur Gazetteers, Books, Journals, News Papers, and various online sources. It is a case study method, a very popular form of qualitative and quantitative analysis. It involves profound and complete observation of selected units. The present study has analysed the seasonal migration and levels of educational attainment among sugarcane cutters in a selected region of Kolhapur district. 'Field survey with personal interview method through interview schedule technique with open and closed questions' method is used. For this study, one out of 18 co-operative sugar factories of the Kolhapur district is considered.

Previous investigations:

The information given in Table 1 explains how the sugar industry plays a

profound role in the economy of the world. But comes along with positive as well as negative aspects. During the last two decades, India became the second-largest country producing sugar next to Brazil and rules the agricultural economy of India after cotton. “It directly or indirectly impacts the livelihoods of over 5 crore farmers and their dependents, involved in cultivating sugarcane in an area of almost 50 lakh hectares. In addition, 5 lakh workers in sugar mills and another 10 lakh workers, through indirect means, draw their livelihoods from the sugar industry. 2.2 India is the largest consumer and the second-largest producer of sugar in the world. Brazil has historically led the world in sugar production” (NitiAayog, 2020)

Table 1: Production of sugarcane and Sugar in the World (2015-16)

Sr. No.	Country	Area (Lakh ha)	Percentage to World	Sugarcane production (Crore Tonnes)	Percentage to World	Yield (Tonne / ha)	Sugar Production (Lakh tonnes)
1	Brazil	10.41	37.06	73.93	39.38	75.17	358.0
2	India	5.01	19.07	34.12	18.17	67.43	272.5
3	China	1.76	6.86	12.55	6.68	69.01	133.0
4	Thailand	1.35	4.98	10.01	5.33	75.74	102.0
5	Pakistan	1.14	4.26	6.38	3.39	56.48	47.0
6	Mexico	0.76	2.94	6.19	3.26	78.16	65.1
	World				-	70.77	1723.6

Source: (Niti Aayog, 2020)

The highest sugar-producing country perceptibly requires a large number of workers in it to run well. Along with the worldwide classification of sugar production, the following table no. 2 defines the Indian state’s sugarcane cultivation from 2014-15 to 2016-17. It reveals that the leading state of sugarcane cultivation in Uttar Pradesh which is also highest in population. After Uttar Pradesh second-largest state is Maharashtra. The present study highlights the problems of the workers working in Maharashtra especially Kolhapur i.e., selected study region

Table 2: State-wise Area under Sugarcane Cultivation (‘000 Hectares)

Sr. No.	States	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
1	Uttar Pradesh	2140.8	2169	2160
2	Maharashtra	1030	987	633.3
3	Karnataka	480	450	397
4	Bihar	254.3	244	239.6
5	Tamil Nadu	263.1	252.3	218.3
6	Andhra Pradesh	139	122	103
7	Haryana	97	93	102
8	Punjab	94	90	88

9	Uttar Pradesh	2140.8	2169	2160
10	Rest of India	101.7	96.9	93
11	All India	455.9	423	401.6
		5055.8	4927.1	4435.7

Source: (Niti Aayog, 2020)

Analysis and Results of the Research

Literacy Levels among Sugarcane-Cutters at Study Area

It is very important to visualize the distribution of scholastic attainment of adult males and females and the gender gap in education. To understand the literacy rate among sugarcane-cutters following formula is used:

$$\text{Literacy Rate} = \frac{\text{Literate Population}}{\text{Total Population}} \times 100$$

Based on the above formula, the result at Chh. Shahu Cooperative Sugar Factory, Kagal, Dist. Kolhapur the present literacy rate is 76.65 percent. The following table shows the comparative analysis of literacy levels among sugarcane cutters in the study region since 2013-14 and 2018-19.

Table 3: Literacy Levels among Sugarcane-cutters at C. S. Co-op. S. F., Kagal

Sr. No.	Literacy Levels	Percentage 2013-14	Percentage 2018-19
1	Below 6 years age group	11.27	2.79
2	Illiterate	38.03	20.56
3	Literate	50.7	76.65
4		100.00	100.00
C.S.Co-op.S.F., Kagal: Chh. Shahu Coop. Sugar Factory, Kagal			

Source: Field Work 2013-14 and 2018-19

Fig. 1

In 2013-14 below six age group, it was 11.27 percent population that is considered as a category of children. It is reduced up to 2.79 percent in 2018-19. The very highlighting and measurable thing is that the illiteracy rate reduced from 38.03 to 20.56 percent. As a result, the literacy rate is increased remarkably from 50.7 to 76.65 since 2013-14 to 2018-19 respectively. It reveals that the importance of education is day by day taking a much better place amongst sugarcane cutters. One side of the coin is this but, on another side, still, they are struggling as same as it was in 2013-14. Although taking education and being a literate number of people, the nature of their work has not been changed yet. There is a need to focus to increase literacy more with some standards of output that will be beneficial for these workers.

Table 4: Literacy Levels among Sugarcane-cutters at C. S. Co-op. S. F., Kagal

Sr. No.	Literacy Levels	Percentage 2013-14	Percentage 2018-19
1	Below 6 years age group	11.27	2.79
2	Illiterate	38.03	20.56
3	Primary (I to IV class)	19.72	14.29
4	Middle Education (V to VII class)	13.38	21.60
5	Secondary (VIII to X class)	12.68	15.33
6	Higher Secondary (XI to XII class)	3.52	5.92
7	Graduate	0.70	2.44
8	Post-Graduate	0.00	0.35
9	Other	0.70	16.72
	Total	100.00	100.00
C.S.Co-op.S.F., Kagal: Chh. Shahu Coop. Sugar Factory, Kagal			

Source: Field Work 2013-14 and 2018-19

Fig. 2

The present Table 4 and Fig 2 distinguish the literate people in various categories because of which it becomes easier to understand how are they literate? The above fig. 2 depicts an increase in the literacy rate from 2013-14 to 2018-19. But more specifically in Table 4, it is exposed that the proportion of students with primary education is reduced from 19.72 to 14.29 percent during the five years respectively. This means the percentage of students taking primary education is reduced by nearly five percent in five years. The rate of students taking middle education in between the fifth standard till the seventh standard is increased strangely i.e., 13.38 to 21.60 percent respectively till 2018-19. The enrolment of students towards higher education is also increased satisfactorily from 3.52 to 5.92 percent. Also at the graduation level, a good result found that mean only 0.70 percent of students were enrolled for graduation in 2013-14 which is triggered to 2.44 percent in 2018-19. One of the most satisfactory results is that there was no one taking post-graduation education in 2013-14 which is reversed in at least 0.35 percent. In other courses, 0.70 percent of sugarcane-cutters were found doing B.Ed. but in 2018-19 16.72 people are taking other education like B.Ed. and other certificate courses.

5.6 Role of Sugar Schools

Sugar Schools also known as Sakhar Shala in the local language are schools established at the place of destination where workers are migrated. The main purpose of sugar schools is to continue the education they are taking at their place of origin. In the settlements of sugar cane cutters, which purposefully works to provide Primary education to children of sugarcane-cutters who are disadvantaged of education due to their parents' seasonal migration to the sugar factory areas.

These Sugar School does not function around the year. It operates only during

the second part of the educational year. Generally, schools initiate fresh and new classes in June after the summer holidays. The children of sugar cane cutters migrate for the period of the crushing, which is stuck between October/November and March/April. They go to schools in their villages previous to seasonal migration. During migration, children do not attend school for several months. When these families go back to their villages in March/April the next year, children are not capable of pick-up their schooling from where they left off and therefore fall victim to illiteracy as they are enforced to drop out. In Sugar Schools, the classes are held between the migration periods, which are around six months. The most important aim of the Sugar School is to help children in being steady in education procedures and reduce the dropout and failure rates happening due to seasonal migration. It also helps the children to get back into the normal education flow.

The strategies for mainstreaming out-of-school children can be broadly divided into 3 major categories - (i) enrolment drives, (ii) universalizing physical access, and (iii) strategies for other out-of-school children. (Patra, 2007)

The Indian government had brought a constitutional amendment on 13th December 2002. It makes the right to basic education a fundamental right for every child between 6 to 14 years of age. Article 45 of the Constitution of India, states that “the State shall endeavor to provide, within ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years”. It is envisaged that the spread of elementary education would have a good impact on other social indicators like population growth, health, and women’s development, as well as enhancement of productivity of the economy and reduction in unemployment. Ultimately it will lead to a just and humane society and a better place for everyone. Migrant children are deprived of their fundamental rights to elementary education. They migrate with their parents to sugar factory areas. They are too young to realize their right and exercise it. Even parents are not aware of the benefits that result from education and the fact that elementary education is a fundamental right and any negligence on their part may cost them heavily. But it is difficult to lay the blame on parents squarely. When parents are struggling for existence, the education of these children takes a backseat. In the sugar factories, these children work with their parents. Since more hands fetch more income, parents too encourage it. They bring additional income for the family. (Wadikar, 2004)

Another aspect of sugarcane cutters i.e., health is also needs to consider. “The situations of housing, amenities, and assets indicate the prosperity of a person and standard of living. Bad housing conditions and facilities lead towards the low standard of living and it creates various health problems.” (Kale, 2017)

Sugar School Practices at the Study Region:

According to the prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 “Child” means a person who, if a male, has not completed twenty-one years of age, and if a female, has not completed eighteen years of age. The Indian legal system has already adopted 18

years as the upper age limit for childhood (Unicef, 2007)

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 “An Act to prohibit the engagement of children in all occupations and to prohibit the engagement of adolescents in hazardous occupations and process and the matter connected therewith or incidental thereto” (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2016) says that children are not allowed for hazardous work. But the scenario is reversed in the present study. Workers are taking their children to farms to help them. The psychological traits of sugarcane cutters are not in the court of education. This empirical investigation, hence, arises the question of educational attainment for sustainable livelihood. Therefore, the question of child education and literacy towards a better community remained unanswered.

The present table 5 elaborates the cognitive processes triggered in response to the questions asked about schooling to sugarcane cutters to send their child to sugar school or continuing education.

Table 5: Sugar School Practices and Sugarcane-Cutters Opinions at C. S. Co-op. S. F., Kagal

Views of Sugarcane-cutters	Percentage 2013-14	Percentage 2018-19
Yes (Positive to sending Schools)	19.05	25.7
No (Not ready to send their Children School)	2.38	29.57
No Opinion (Don't want to talk regarding educational attainment)	78.57	44.71

Source: Field Survey 2013-14 and 2018-19

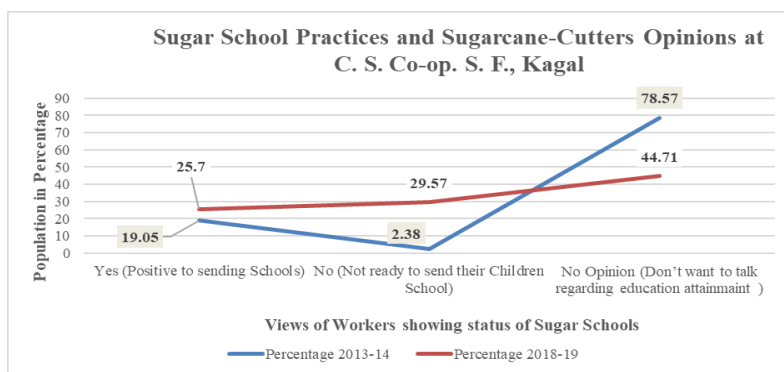


Fig. 3

At Chh. Shahu Cooperative Sugar Factory, Kagal there is a sugar school viz. Chh. Shahu Sakhar Shala. The children have uniforms in school. It is noticed after surveying that in 2013-14 total of 19.05 percent of people said that they are happy to send their children to the sugar school while the percentage is increased up to 25.7

during 2018-19. It is an obvious positive mindset of the workers has developed during these five years. But the number is not so big to become satisfied with that. Only 2.38 percent of sugarcane-cutters said that they are not interested to send their children to school. The most dangerous thing is that during 2018-19 nearly 29.57 percent of families refused to send their children to school rather they prefer them to take on the field to earn money. This result again reflects in the attainment mentioned in table 4 and fig. 2 i.e., the number of students engaged in primary education is reduced remarkably. The remaining 78.57 and 44.71 percent of people were neutral despite the fact answering about the sugar school in 2013-14 and 2018-19 respectively.

Conclusion:

Seasonal migration is a significant part of the living (income) sources of the disadvantaged and unskilled people of rural areas. After profound cross-sectional analysis, it is found that the levels of educational attainment from 2013-14 till 2018-19 are increased but not satisfactorily. The results show that the percentage of students taking primary education is reduced by nearly five percent from 2013-14 to 2018-19

The rate of students taking middle education in between the fifth standard till the seventh standard is increased strangely i.e., 13.38 to 21.60 percent respectively till 2018-19. The enrolment of students towards higher education is also observed satisfactory i.e., 3.52 to 5.92 percent. The most serious observation is that during 2018-19 nearly 29.57 percent of families refused to send their children to school rather they prefer them to take on the field to earn money. This result again reflects in the attainment mentioned in table 4 and fig. 2 i.e., the number of students engaged in primary education is reduced remarkably. The remaining 78.57 and 44.71 percent of people were neutral regarding sending their children to the sugar schools in 2013-14 and 2018-19 respectively. It is not achievable but satisfactory growth is found in the level of education but along with one another problem. Although taking higher education or literate still, these educated people are busy working in the same occupation. The status of sugar schools is also not good to sustain the interest of children for getting a higher education and bridging the gap.

Sugarcane cutters are migrated due to drought-prone conditions in their native places i.e., the Marathwada region of Maharashtra, which in turn raises the question of their education.

1. Current research suggests that the families are lagging in primary education, which will create a huge gap in the future in their educational attainment. This will make it more difficult for them to develop themselves in the community and get the appropriate entrepreneurship skills or jobs. As they are expected to complete their education properly and get good jobs.
2. according to current research, 76.65 percent of the people are literate, still are doing the same work, so being literate and well-educated only cannot convert the nature of their work, psychology, and lifestyle.

3. It is also found that workers are reluctant to send their children to school because of the nature of their hard work, instead, they prefer their children useful to contribute to the farm at the place of destination. It also has been pointed out that, even, these children are not ready to go to sugar schools, rather, prefer to work in the fields with their parents.
4. There are many reasons for this scenario, the most important and first of which is
5. The factory should take the responsibility of making sugar schools active in such a way that the children will be ready to sit in that class
6. Different Teachers for every class should be appointed by the factory for its success at a primary level.
7. Sugar Schools must be as a regular school with each class (at least) up to 7th standard as well as more beautiful to pull the students in.
8. Children should be encouraged to attend school and study instead of working on the farms with their families. So that their education will not be interrupted. The teachers should take brainstorming, icebreaker activities in the class due to which they will remain engaged attending such tasks and will start truly learning. For that sugar schools of the factory should try to search and implement various schemes from the government and other sources too.
9. The education of children of seasonal migrants will carry on being a challenge. For that reason, the government and civil society bodies require to tackle these issues systemically to help disadvantaged children to widen them into productive individuals.
10. Govt. of Maharashtra can make tie-ups in between the schools and colleges of Western Maharashtra where workers migrate and from where they migrated. Ex. All the govt. schools of Beed district should make collaboration or linkage or MoU with the schools and colleges of Kolhapur district. It is possible at the policy level only and chances of success are huge.
11. The schools and colleges of western Maharashtra can coordinate with the situation and accept students for continuing their education.
12. NGOs should be encouraged to succeed in this endeavour by conducting various workshops/ seminars from the government or the Sugar factories. Even if the children start getting admission in schools or colleges in the place of destination, the possibility of losing confidence in them cannot be ruled out. The schools or colleges must develop certain rubrics to prevent this from happening.
13. The factory should provide dress codes for particular schools or colleges. So, that the students do not have any stigma or stigma attached to their minds while mixing with this study environment. As well as the care of transportation facilities or bicycles for girls by considering their economic background should be done with priority. Mid-day-meal programs for such students should be more effective. so, the parents will not be bothered about their children's consumption. Those parents now can work on the

farm without any hesitation and students can get education in schools and colleges without any indecision.

14. The particular schools and colleges also should motivate sugarcane cutters' children by giving them prizes for their little works and contributions too.

15. The factory should take initiatives by approaching various NGOs and generating the scheme of getting scholarships for students, Projects like Nirbhaya for girls should be started more vigorously, Girls should be given self-defence lessons and they should be trained in karate or judo like activities, boys and especially girls should also be involved in sports so that their mental health goes well with the physical strength.

16. If it becomes possible then in that case, any of the students will become engineers, officers, teachers, professors, astronauts, scientists, doctors, agricultural officers, or well-educated farmers too or we will enable them to work in any branch of their choice, and our goal of turning unskilled labors into skilled one will be achieved. The crown of success of all these will add another dimension

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