Aspirations Of Higher Education And The Struggles Of Marwari Baniyas

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Abstract

The Marwadi Baniya community, historically known for their entrepreneurial heroism and mercantile traditions.They have traditionally prioritised commerce and trade over formal education.However,the changing socio-economic landscape of India has promoted a growing aspirations for higher education among the Marwari Baniyas.This paper explores the aspirations for higher education among the Marwari Youth and various challenges faced by them in this domain.It also examines the contradictory relationship between traditional business oriented family expectations and the willingness of pursuing academic excellence.This paper also examines the historical context, current educational aspirations and unique struggles faced by the Marwari Baniyas in accessing higher Drawing on academic studies, institutional reports and socio-cultural analysis,this reserch paper highlights both the barriers and the gradual transformations in the Marwari Baniya community.

KEYWORDS

Marwadi Baniya,Higher Education, Challenges, Aspirations, Struggles, Business

Introduction

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the World (*Nelson Mandela,1994*). Education enables individual to reach their full potential as human beings both individually and as a member of the society.It is also the driver of a country's economic development.Education aims at bringing an all round development of humans.In the 21st present time, higher education is essential for succeeding both socially and professionally. Keeping in mind the present time, everyone should aquire higher education.But to achieve this, different categories are facing different difficulties.Here we are going to discuss the various

issues, difficulties and challenges faced by the Marwari Baniyas;the leading mercantile and trade group,in pursuing Higher Education.

Education:An Overview

Education is an important tool which is very useful in everybody's life.It makes humans the smartest creature on earth.It empowers us to face various challenges of life efficiently.Education is the act of learning things around us.Various scholars have defined the concept of education in their own unique ways.Education is the action exercised by the older generation upon those who are not yet ready for social life (*Durkheim,1922).* Education is the process by which the individual acquires the many physical,moraland social capacities demanded of him by the group in to which he/she is born and which he/she must function (*J S Swift,1969).*If we talk about the concept of higher education,then it is also defined by various scholars in a number of ways.Higher education is a specialized institution for the transformation of advanced knowledge and skills for the selection and training of individuals for elite roles in society (*T Parsons & G M Platt,1973).* Higher Education is an insitutionalised process of credentialing which confers status and access to positions of power through the attainment of degree and diplomas(*R Collins.1979).*Higher Education is a field that reproduces social hierarchies by legitimising certain forms of cultural capital and habitus,thus perpetuating existing social structure (*P.Bourdieu,1984).*Thus we can note that Higher Education is quiet necessary in everybody's life for succeeding academically as well as professionally.

Objectives

The main goal of this research paper are the following :-

• To explore the motivations driving individuals from the Marwari Baniya community to pursue higher education.

• To understand the challenges and obstacles faced by them in   accessing and continuing higher education.

• To examine the conflict between traditional values and the increasing desire for higher education and professional careers.

• To analyze specific barriers such as early marriage and the pressure to take over family businesses, especially for first-generation learners.

• To explore the impact of urbanization, new job opportunities, and exposure to global ideas on the Marwari Baniya Community's attitudes towards education.

• To suggest practical steps and policy recommendations that can help increase access to higher education for Marwari Baniyas.

Methodologies

Qualitative Methods

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Ethnographic Case Studies.   Semi-structured interviews

To understand the aspirations and struggles of the Marwari Baniya community regarding higher education,this study uses a mixture of different methods to collect and analyse information.This study uses Qualitative methods like Ethnographic Case Studies and Semi structured interview.I spent time with 50(fifty) Marwari Baniya families in both urban and rural areas of my home district Bargarh(Odisha) and performed both the data collection methds.In my study,I talked directly with students, their parents and with their teachers.I also observed how such families make decisions about higher education.The respondents shared their own stories about what helps or blocks Marwari Baniya from going for higher education.A close attention to real life situations and family conversations was paid to see how choices about higher education are made.

Data Analysis

Table – key themes identified in 50(Fifty) Marwari Baniya Families

Themes	Number of families observed	Percentage of families observed	Examples Insights
Business over Education	32	64	Sons are encouraged to join family business after school
Early marriage of daughters	38	76	Daughters are often married soon after secondary education

Genderd Educational roles	39	78	Son's education is prioritised over daughter's
Barriers to higher education	41	82	Social, cultural and financial obstacles were reported

Marwari Community:An Overview

Before discussing this heading,we have to know what is Caste? Various scholars have defined the concept of caste in various ways.Caste is a system of stratification in which mobility up and down the status ladder atleast ideally may not occur (*AW Green,1937).*Caste is a hereditary, endogamous; usually localised group, having a traditional associations with an occupation and particular position in the local hierarchy of caste(*MN Srinivas,1962).*Thus, Baniyas are mercantile caste; primarily from Rajasthan and Gujarat; known for their business acumen.Marwari refers to those who are a subset of this community.Community is not just a geographical or physical entity but is also a social and emotional construct (*Bogardus,1922).* Community is a social unit which is formed through complex relationship between individuals (*K Davis,1949).*Thus, community may be defined as a social structure that organises the activities and residence of people in a physical space.Among various types of community,the Marwari Baniya Community stands one and unique.

Historical Overview: The Marwari community,native to the region of Marwar;an arid landscape of Rajasthan.They have earned a distinguished reputation for business dominance across India.Historically,their socio-cultural identity was forged through migration and commerce,with Marwaris establishing far-reaching business networks in textiles, banking and speculative markets by the 19th century(*Rajasthan foundation,ND Saha,2003).*Their succes was rooted in community solidarity and a decentralised kinship system,that prioritised informal business activities over formal education (*Saha,2003).*The traditions of early exposure to entrepreneurship became a hallmark of Marwari Baniyas' identity, shaping,both of their socio-economic mobility and their leading legacy in Indian trade.

Traditional attitudes towards Education – For a long time, Marwari families viewed that formal schooling was less important than learning business skills by working in family.From a very young age,the boys were taught how to run the family business, focussing on pracical things like accounting, market deals etc instead of getting academic degrees (*Marwari India Magazine,2003).*This ethos was reinforced by various community institutions such as caste and religion based organizations,by treating business success as the main sign of status (*Saha,2003).*In early 20th century, Marwari Baniya migrants in Bengal and Bihar, initially started money lending and trading, using their profits to buy land and start industries rather than spending it on education.

Aspirational Shift: The Quest for Higher Education -The past three decades have witnessed a huge shift in attitudes and motivation towards higher education among the Marwari Baniya Community.Several factors

have contributed towards this transformation such as – Globalisation,Social Mobility, Diversification, Marwari Institutions etc

(i) Globalisation – All those processes by which the people of the world are incorporated into a single world society is known as Globalisation(*M.Albrow & E.King,1990)*. Globalisation is the intensification of worldwide social relations which links distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa(*A Giddens,1990).* Exposure to international markets and business practices have highlighted the importance of Higher Education, especially in the field of finance, technology and management (*Bardla and Kanwar,2024*)

(ii) Diversification – It refers to the process of increasing the variety of something.As the traditional business sectors of the Marwari Baniyas are facing increased competitions, Marwari youths are showing interest for seeking professional qualification and higher education to diversify their career options (*Amoncar,2017).*

(iii) Social Mobility – It refers to the shift in an individual's social status l,from one to another (*PA Sorokin,1927).*It refers to the movement of an individual or group from one social position to another (*WP Scott,2014).* Nowadays, among the Marwari Baniyas,the higher education is seen as a tool to enhance prestige and increased opportunities,both within and outside the community (*Sarda,2016).*

(iv) Marwari Institutions – The emergence of Marwari-run educational institutions such as the Marwari University plays a leading role in this changing landscape.These institutions aim to integrate academic excellence with entrepreneurial training, there by addressing the unique needs of the Marwari community (*The Marwari University,2023).*Such institutions have implemented innovative teaching methods, industry partnership and value-added courses to enhance employability and entrepreneurial skills

Voices of persistence: Hurdles in the

Higher Education journeys of the Marwari Baniyas

There are a number of challenges and difficulties for the Marwari Baniyas to pursue Higher Education.Some of such obstacles are- family expectations and the pressure of succession planning, Social and cultural issues, Institutional and systemic difficulties,lack of academic role models etc.

(i) Family expectations and the pressure of succession planning -One of the most important barriers faced by Marwari youth aspiring for higher education is the expectation of the family members from them to join the family business at a young age.Marwari families often focus more on preparing sons to take over the business than on their academic achievements, especially if the boys want to study something unrelated to business.This creates a situation where education is limited because, families worry that too much education might make the boy loose interest in the business or leave the family traditions behind.Boys who want to pursue higher studies especially abroad,may face much resistance from family members who fear losing the business continuity or the dilution of traditional values(*Amoncar,2017).*

(ii) Social and Cultural issues – There are also many socio-cultural barriers in pursuant of higher education among the Marwari Baniyas.Conservative attitudes and community norms may discourage prolonged academic engagement, especially if it delays marriage or business succession.There is a fear that exposure to diverse cultures may weaken the traditional values and respect for family business (*Sarda,2016).* Marriage and caste groups often support these thoughts, pushing the Marwari youth to follow the usual ways.

(iii) Institutional and systemic difficulties-Many Marwari Baniya families live in rural and semi-urban areas where the Indian education system is facing various issues.These adversities include rigidity and limited flexibility, Old-fashioned teaching which doesn't focus on real-life skills, unavailability of good teachers & learning materials etc.Due to all these institutional and systemic difficulties,the dream of pursuing higher education among Marwari Baniyas remain unfulfilled.

(iv) Lack of academic role models – A lack of traditions in higher education among the Marwari Baniyas,results in limited guidance, motivation and encouragement for higher academic pursuits.The Baniya youth may face difficulties to find mentors who have successfully balanced the higher education and business commitments.In such families,the transition from secondary school to college can be discouraging due to the absence of academic role models.

Recommendations for effective interventions

Higher education is the need of the hour,so everyone should be focused to acquire higher and higher academic degree.To fulfill the dream of higher education among the Marwari Baniyas,few strategies and methods can be useful for effective interventions.Few of such options are- Marwari University Initiative, Community engagement techniques, Creative approaches etc.

(i) Marwari University Initiative – The Marwari University established in Rajkot(GJ), represents a leading institutional efforts to address the higher educational needs of the Marwaris.This university has introduced innovative teaching methodologies like VR labs,Open book exams, flipped classroom and strong industry linkage to enhance students enrollment, employability and entrepreneurship.It also bridges the gap between academic learning and practical skills (*Marwari University,2023*).In 2023-24 this university organised a numbers of expert talks, workshops and placement drives; resulting in high placement rates.Such institutional Initiative prepares the Marwari youth for both academic as well as business domains.

(ii) Community Engagement Techniques – Various community engagement techniques may be useful in addressing the difficulties in pursuing higher education among the Marwari Baniyas.Few of such strategies are-Parental education,Alumini support groups, connecting work and learning etc . Programs to help families and parents understand how higher education will help their children in the future is the first step while addressing this issue.In addition, strong alumini support groups are needed to give advice and support to the current students about the significance and utility of higher education at present time.Furthermore, connecting work with learning and offering hand-on training,may work as a catalyst which will motivate the Marwari Baniyas towards higher education.

(iii) Creative Approaches – Few creative and innovative approaches such as mentorship, skill development, flexible curriculum, industry linkage, first generation learner support etc can be useful to push Marwari Baniyas for higher education.By mentorship programs we can create connection between successful professionals and Marwari aspirants which can give fruitful outputs.Focussing on the development of skills along with academic subjects also sounds good to address this issue.The CBCS(Choice Based Credit System) may be useful in letting students choose subjects those match their interest and career plans.If the teaching will be linked with companies and professional groups,the students may get the desired results.Also providing support and help to first generation Marwari learners,will be the panacea in addressing the challenges.

Summary

This research paper critically examines the intersection of cultural norms,gender dynamics and higher educational aspiration of the Marwari Baniya Community.It also examines how this leading mercantile community's aspirations for higher education is shaped and limited by traditional family's thoughts, socio-cultural norms and the long-standing prioritisation of business over the formal academics.This paper helps explain why Marwari families with their trade oriented habitus may undervalue formal higher education.In case of Marwari Baniya females;the analysis would be enriched by engaging with Sharmila Rege's feminist approach,which illustrates how caste and gender act as system of oppression, particularly restricting women's access to education in India . Thus this reserch paper can be strengthened by referencing theory of cultural

capital and social reproduction (*P.Bourdieu,1977 & 1985)* and the intersectional analysis of caste and gender (*Sharmila Rege, 1998 & 2006).*Both these theoritical foundations are helpful for understanding the unique higher educational struggles and challenges within the Marwari Baniya Community.

Conclusions

To conclude,we can say that Education is the modification of behaviour.It is a basic,universal and fundamental human rights;so everyone irrespective of their caste, class and gender should enjoy the taste of higher education.The aspirations for higher education among the Marwari Baniyas reflect greater degree of mobilization and modernization in India.While various barriers and challenges remain rooted,still there is a growing momentum towards integrating academic excellence with entrepreneurial mindset.Addressing the challenges requires multidimensional efforts which in results will create an environment where the Marwari Baniya Community may prosper both academically as well as professionally.

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