**Exploring the access to opportunities in terms of education and health among the rural youth in Rajasthan**

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Abstract

This paper is based on the data gathered by students of IIM Udaipur. They compared the opportunity set available for education to the youth in villages to which they went for field work with the opportunities which they themselves had during their upbringing. In a sense this compares the privileged, urban-metropolitan youth with the under-privileged rural youth. Data was gathered by interviewing 1500 rural youth; equally divided among the genders, from 90 villages of 4 districts of South Rajasthan. The students who conducted the study themselves formed the urban “sample” and it was clearly not representative of all urban youth.

It is found that barring an occasional exception, the rural and urban samples came from nearly the opposite ends of the social spectrum. It is therefore not surprising that the opportunity sets they report are contrasting. Though they come form the same age group, a majority of the rural youth were already married and many of them had become parents. Their parents had much lower level of education when compared to parental background of urban youth. They had gone to Government run schools in their parental villages. They walked to school. They had to work and support parental occupations. A small 8% of them had access to any co-curricular activities. Sports facilities existed for them and some of them had used them. Libraries were largely not within reach to rural students. They did not have access to coaching classes. Their awareness of entrance examinations and other competitive examinations was low and participation in such tests even lower. The urban youth were mostly unmarried. 86% of them went to private schools, They used motorized vehicles or shared buses to reach their educational centres. They had advantage of coaching classes and special tuition classes.

**Introduction:**

The purpose of this study was to capture the access to opportunities by a rural boy/girl as compared to their urban counterparts and how this has affected their lives in various spheres.

The following data is compiled from the interviews taken by the students of IIM – Udaipur in 90 villages of Rajasthan. They were asked to interview people from the rural parts in Rajasthan. Apart from Udaipur district, data was collected from Rajsamand, Banswara and Bhilwara, The students filled their own information and thus were treated as the participants from urban areas.

**Profile of the participants**

The data is collected from the rural areas around Udaipur. Around 1500 participants were interviewed for the process.

The median age of the respondents is 25 years. 60% of the respondents interviewed were men and the rest women.

1. **Religion**  
   The religion of respondents in both the urban and rural areas are given in the table below:

Most of the respondents were Hindus – the majority religion in the district of Udaipur (since most of the data was from Udaipur district).

1. **Caste**

The caste of both the urban and rural areas are shown in the table below.

1. **Marital status**

Compared to their urban counterparts, the rural youth get married at a younger age. This can act as a hurdle towards education eventually leading to a reduction in the opportunities.

1. **Status of Education**
2. **Level of Education**

The urban sample consists of the IIM Udaipur students. Hence the percentage of people who have completed their Graduation is high.

In rural areas 15% of the respondents had not been enrolled in school, while about 35% of the population had completed only till the primary level of education. This percentage goes on decreasing as the level of education increases.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Level of Education** | **Rural %** | **Urban%** |
| Not enrolled in school (1) | 15.64968 | 0 |
| Below Primary (2) | 15.57789 | 0 |
| Primary (3) | 35.53482 | 0 |
| Class X (4) | 18.09045 | 0 |
| Intermediate (5) | 15.79325 | 0 |
| Graduate (7) | 14.28571 | 96.69421 |
| Post Graduate (8) | 0.717875 | 3.305785 |

1. **Type of school**

Most of the people in rural areas go to Government schools and Anganwadis. The urban youth have completed their graduation in this case, most of them have an easy access to private schools and hence majority of the urban youth go to private schools (86%). It has also been seen in the case of rural youth that if the parents are literate the children are more likely to go to a private school. Private schools are also not located nearby in the rural areas and hence distance plays an important role.

1. **Distance from school**

Distance from school is an important criterion which affects the level of attendance as the availability of access to the facility plays a vital role.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Mode of transport** |  |
|  | Rural | Urban |
| Walk (1) | 83.66197 | 14.87603 |
| Bicycle (2) | 9.014085 | 28.09917 |
| Shared Vehicle (3) | 7.323944 | 57.02479 |

Majority of the rural population walk to school or use a bicycle for transportation. The percentage of shared vehicle is high in urban areas as compared to rural areas. Shared vehicles include school buses, bus services, etc.

1. **English as a subject and tuitions for improving academic performance**

In rural areas, almost 50% of the rural youth did not have English a subject in school or any other education institution.

When asked whether they take extra coaching, it was found that tuitions are not taken in rural areas either due to lack of financial resources of unavailability of teachers. On the other hand, as expected, tuitions were taken by most of the urban youth.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Enrolled in Tuitions** | | |
|  | Rural | Urban |
| Yes | 7.830951 | 89.2562 |
| NO | 92.16905 | 10.7438 |

1. **Parents’ Literacy**

This is an important parameter as an individual is motivated during childhood by his parents’ actions. Intergenerational mobility plays a vital part in creating the circumstances in which a child is raised.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Parents’ literacy** | | |
|  | Rural | Urban |
| Literate | 41.95152 | 100 |
| Illiterate | 58.04848 | 0 |

1. **Entrance exams**

When asked whether they have attempted any entrance exams, 34% of the rural respondents responded affirmative. The exams for which they appeared included army/defence, CPRF, RRB.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Entrance exams attempted** | | |
|  | Rural | Urban |
| Yes | 34.70919 | 100 |
| No | 65.29081 | 0 |

1. **Co- curricular activities**

Co-Curricular activities consist of sports, drama, painting, debates and other activities which are taken up apart from the ordinary course of the study. Only 8% of the rural respondents agreed to have participated in at least one of these activities but in the case of urban participants, the percentage was as high as 78%. This may be due to the lack of initiatives and opportunities in rural schools. One’s personality is shaped during childhood with the amount of exposure they get and participating in such activities surely broadens a child’s horizon.

1. **Participation in sports**

Almost 42% of the rural respondents have answered to have participated in sports during their schooling. Unlike this 50-50 break up, about 98% of urban participants had participated in sports. It is an essential tool during education because it helps to build the student’s mental as well as physical well-being.

1. **Life advice**

The respondents were asked, who gave them advice regarding their life decisions or who motivated them to study.

For both the rural as well as urban respondents, their parents and teachers played a significant role in giving them advice. In the rural respondents, as most of the rural youth were married at an early age, they also received advice from their respective spouses. However, for some rural respondents, there was no one to give them life advice.

At this stage of civilisation, the internet plays a vital role in the decision making of the youth especially the urban youth.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Rural** | **Urban** |
| PARENTS | 36.64987406 | 43.80165289 |
| TEACHERS | 8.060453401 | 14.87603306 |
| OTHERS | 9.005037783 | 16.52892562 |
| SPOUSE | 6.926952141 | 0 |
| FAMILY MEMBERS | 10.64231738 | 20.66115702 |
| NO ONE | 28.71536524 | 4.132231405 |

1. **Access to Library**

Libraries are a source of the extra knowledge you gain out of class and some also use it for reference. As expected, 78% of the rural respondents said theta there was no library nearby their villages where as 92% of the urban respondents had access to the nearby library.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Library Nearby** | **Rural** | **Urban** |
| NO | 78.90479154 | 7.438016529 |
| YES | 21.09520846 | 92.56198347 |

Only 34% of the rural respondents who had a library nearby had paid it a visit. Since the urban respondents consisted of the IIM-Udaipur students, the percentage of respondents who visited a library was as high as 91%.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Visits library | Rural | Urban |
| YES | 34.21828909 | 91.07142857 |
| NO | 65.78171091 | 8.928571429 |

1. **Magazine**

Magazines and newspaper are an excellent source of knowledge of what is happening in and around the world. There are magazines which serve an educational purpose such as Pratiyogita Darpan and Yojana Kurukshetra which help during competitive exams. Only 31% of the rural respondents had read an educational magazine. The percentage of urban respondents who have read an educational magazine is quite low when compared to the rural respondents. Only 4% of the urban youth have read educational magazines. This may be due to the availability of the internet as Google is substituting magazines on a rapid scale.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Mag | Rural | Urban |
| YES | 31.30056005 | 4.132231405 |
| NO | 68.69943995 | 95.8677686 |

1. **Visited Panchayat Office**

Awareness is necessary for every individual. Panchayat office provides information and solves problems of the village. Almost 63% of the rural youth had visited a panchayat office.

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| --- | --- |
| **Panchayat office** | **Rural** |
| YES | 63.59676416 |
| NO | 36.40323584 |

1. **Out of Village**

As seen in the pie chart, almost 79% of the rural respondents have been out of their villages at least once. In the table below, we also discuss the various reasons why the rural respondents go out of the village

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Reasons** | **Rural** |
| WORK | 59.68778696 |
| EDUCATION | 13.03948577 |
| VACATION | 20.38567493 |
| OTHERS | 6.887052342 |

Lack of employment opportunities was the main reason for the respondents to go out of the villages. Some also went nearby to their relatives place in urban areas. Respondents went to other villages for marriage functions as well. In the other category mentioned in the table below various reasons like hospital visits, shopping, girl moving away after marriage, etc. were included.

Discussion

This paper is based on the data gathered by students of IIM Udaipur. They compared the opportunity set available for education to the youth in villages to which they went for field work with the opportunities which they themselves had during their upbringing. In a sense this compares the privileged urban metropolitan youth with the under-privileged rural youth. Barring an occasional exception, the rural and urban samples came from nearly the opposite ends of the social spectrum. It is therefore not surprising that the opportunity sets they report are contrasting. Though they come form the same age group, a majority of the rural youth were already married and many of them had become parents. Their parents had much lower level of education when compared to parental background of urban youth. They had gone to Government run schools in their parental villages. They walked to school. They had to work and support parental occupations. A small 8% of them had access to any co-curricular activities. Sports facilities existed for them and some of them had used them. Libraries were largely not within reach to rural students. They did not have access to coaching classes. Their awareness of entrance examinations and other competitive examinations was low and participation in such tests even lower. The urban youth were mostly unmarried. 86% of them went to private schools, They used motorized vehicles or shared buses to reach their educational centres. They had advantage of coaching classes and special tuition classes.

Clearly it is as though the students of IIM-Udaipur who formed the “urban” sample, came from a completely different society when compared to the rural youth they interviewed. However one needs to factor in the fact that they the IIM-U students can not be considered “typical urban” youth. After all the had cleared fairly stiff entrance barrier twice: once when they joined an engineering or other higher education Institute and the second time when they cleared the entrance test for admission to IIM Udaipur. They were thus twice “filtered”. It would have indeed been surprising if the difference in opportunities they experienced in life were not as contrasting with the youth left behind in the stagnant rural areas of among the more backward districts of the country.

We have no intentions of justifying the differences across these two strata of society. The dominant ideology of inclusion and providing level playing field would suggest that youth in rural areas ought to have the same level of opportunities as the young wards of elite families, such as those who go to Institutions of the IIM Udaipur type. However, the stark differences as they exist now need to be recognized as inevitable given the differences in economic status and parental social background. It would appear that comparison across such sharply differing population possibly a less interesting subject of study than comparison across more comparable people. More interesting questions would be about comparing youth from strata or populations which are socially closer to each other. How did the opportunities faced by IIM-U students differ from those drawn from their own social strata but who did not qualify to IIMs? How do small-town youth fare compared to a B+ City? How do youth from villages compare with youth from nearby towns? These comparisons would yield greater insights into the phenomenon of differential opportunities and their consequences on life trajectories of young people in the country.