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Educational Status and Parental Perceptions of Children's Education among Fishing Communities in Mahbubnagar District, Telangana

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Abstract: Education is an important instrument of social transformation, human development and social mobility. It plays a significant role in improving the socioeconomic conditions of marginalized and occupationally disadvantaged communities. Fishing communities in India have historically experienced several socioeconomic challenges, including occupational insecurity, low household income, limited educational opportunities and inadequate access to educational resources. These circumstances may influence parents' educational backgrounds, perceptions and aspirations regarding their children's education.

Objectives: The study aims to assess parents' educational status, awareness, aspirations, attitudes and involvement in their children's education within the fishing community. It also examines the intergenerational relationship between parental education and children's educational progress, higher education aspirations and future employment expectations.

Methodology: Based on tank characteristics, two sample villages were selected, representing perennial and seasonal tanks, across four mandals: Mahabubnagar Rural and Moosapet (rural), and Bhoothpur and Jadcherla (urban). A total of 320 respondents were selected from eight villages across the four mandals.

Findings: The findings of the study are contributed to understanding the role of parental education and perceptions in promoting educational advancement and social mobility among fishing communities. The study also highlights the importance of appropriate educational interventions, government support and community participation in improving educational opportunities for children belonging to fishing communities.

Keywords: *Fishing Community, Parental Educational Status, Children's Education, Educational Aspirations, Social Mobility.*

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Introduction

Education is widely regarded as a key instrument of social change, human development and socioeconomic transformation. It enhances individuals' knowledge, skills, attitudes and capabilities, enabling them to participate effectively in society. It also promotes social equality, improves employment opportunities and facilitates upward social mobility, particularly among disadvantaged communities. In a developing country like India, education plays a crucial role in addressing poverty, social exclusion and intergenerational inequalities. However, disparities in access to quality education and educational attainment persist across social groups, occupational categories, economic backgrounds and geographical regions.

Fishing communities constitute an important occupational and social group in India, contributing significantly to food security, employment generation and the fisheries economy. Their livelihoods are traditionally associated with fishing, fish marketing, processing and related activities across coastal areas and inland water bodies, including rivers, reservoirs and lakes. Despite their economic contribution, many fishing households continue to face socioeconomic challenges such as irregular income, occupational insecurity, poverty and limited access to basic services. These conditions often influence children's educational opportunities and future aspirations. Parental educational background plays a crucial role in shaping children's educational development, as parents' qualifications, awareness and attitudes can influence academic guidance, school participation and aspirations for higher education. However, limited parental education and economic constraints may create challenges in supporting children's academic progress.

Parental perceptions, educational aspirations and attitudes towards gender equality are equally important in determining children's educational opportunities. In fishing communities, increasing awareness of education as a pathway to social mobility and improved employment opportunities has encouraged parents to aspire for better educational outcomes for their children. Nevertheless, traditional occupational practices, household responsibilities, gender roles and financial limitations may affect educational opportunities for boys and

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girls differently. From a sociological perspective, the relationship between parents' educational qualifications and children's educational attainment is significant in understanding intergenerational educational mobility and social transformation.

Although previous studies have addressed the socioeconomic conditions and educational challenges of fishing communities in India, further investigation is needed into parental educational backgrounds, perceptions, aspirations and involvement in children's education. Against this backdrop, the present study examines these dimensions among fishing households, with particular emphasis on educational opportunities, gender perspectives and the influence of family and socioeconomic circumstances on children's educational progress.

Review of Literature

Earlier studies have highlighted the poor socio-economic conditions, uncertain livelihoods and limited educational opportunities of fishing communities. Khatua (2022) noted that many fishing families depend on low and irregular incomes, often borrowing money to meet their daily needs. Bhendarkar et al. (2017) also reported poor housing conditions and low literacy levels among fishing households. Martin et al. (2013) pointed out that taking up different livelihood activities can help families cope with economic difficulties. Rao et al. (2016) and Rahaman et al. (2021) further discussed the changing living conditions, health and socio-economic challenges of fishing communities. These studies help explain how the economic and living conditions of fishing households can influence children's access to education and future opportunities.

Das and Das (2021) examined the educational conditions of children from fishing families in Fraserganj village of the Indian Sundarbans. Their study highlights the need to improve educational opportunities for children in these households. Similarly, M. D. et al. (2021) explored the living conditions of children from fishing communities in Southern India, drawing attention to the challenges affecting their well-being and education. Permana and Mursidi (2020) studied fishermen's perceptions of twelve years of formal education and highlighted the role of parental awareness in children's schooling. Taken together, these studies suggest that children's education depends not only on financial support but also on parents' attitudes and their understanding of the value of education.

Lakshmi and Inain (2024) examined the link between socio-economic conditions, education and employment among young people in the fishing community of Thiruvotriyur Kuppam, Chennai. Their study shows how family background and economic conditions influence the educational and employment opportunities available to fishing youth. Sirait et al (2025) studied the educational attainment of children from fishing families in Tanjung Balai City. Their findings draw attention to the role of household and community conditions in shaping children's educational progress. Ranganathan et al. (2025) examined the education, care and support available to children from fishing communities in India. The study highlights the importance of family support and institutional assistance in meeting children's educational needs. It also points to the need for better support systems to improve their learning opportunities and overall development.

The studies reviewed show that the economic and social conditions of fishing households have a direct bearing on children's education and future opportunities. Irregular income, seasonal employment and limited savings often make it difficult for parents to meet educational expenses. Parental awareness, financial assistance and institutional support also play an important role in children's educational progress. However, limited research has focused on inland fishing communities, particularly in Mahabubnagar district, Telangana. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining their socio-economic conditions and children's educational opportunities.

Objectives

1. To examine parents' educational background and awareness of children's education.
2. To analyse the parental aspirations, gender attitudes and involvement in children's education.
3. To assess the influence of socio-economic and family conditions on children's educational opportunities.

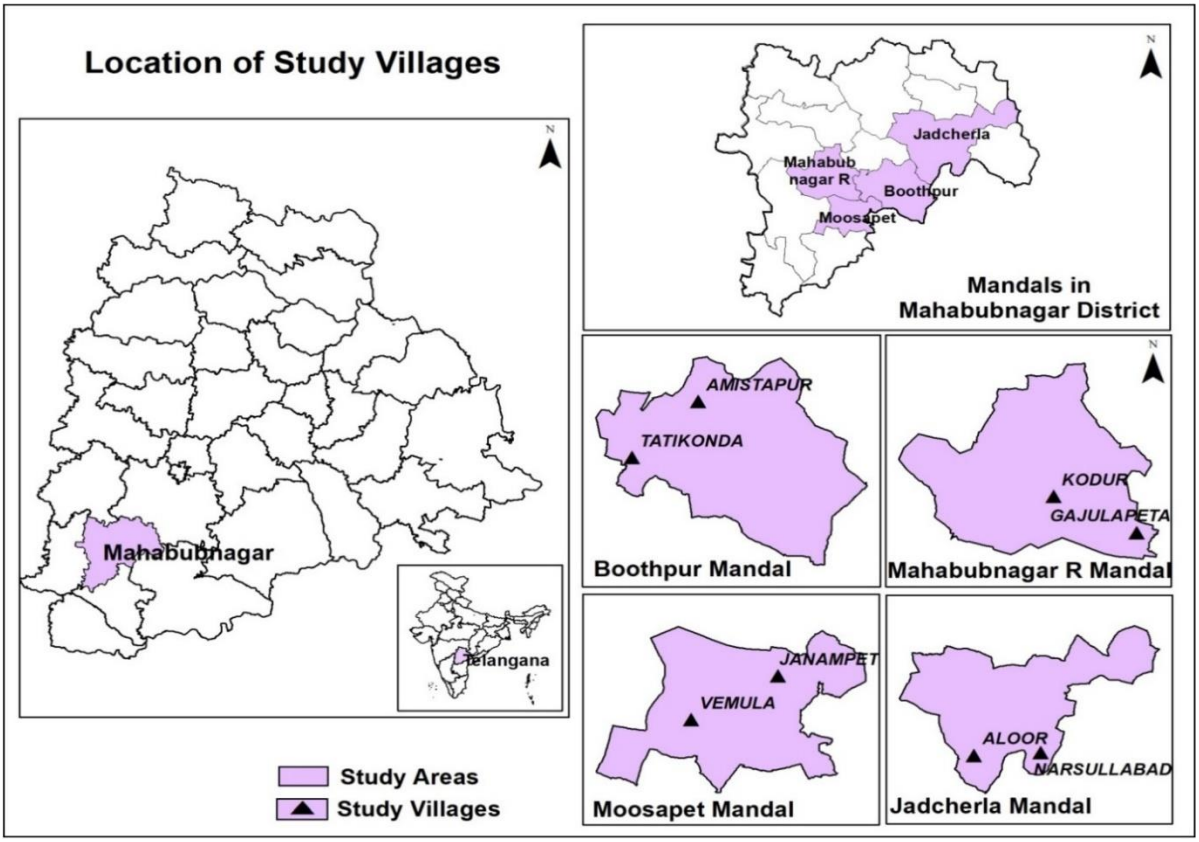
Methodology

Based on the features of the tanks, two sample villages were chosen (one from a perpetual tank and the other from a seasonal tank). Selected samples four mandals based on rural and urban criteria, for rural areas the Mahabubnagar Rural mandal and Moosapet mandal; for the urban locations, Bhoothpur mandal and Jadcherla mandal were selected. From this, a total 3193 number of members actively participation in fishing activity. There are 320 samples in all, which correspond to 8 villages spread across 4 Mandals (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires, interviews involving male and female fishing community members. The data were coded and analysed using Excel and SPSS 22.0, employing frequencies, percentages, cross-tabulations, and income calculations to examine the socio-economic conditions and livelihood patterns of fishing communities.

Table 1: Details of Sample Households and No of FGD's & Case Studies

Sl. No	Name of the Mandal	Name of the Village	Type of Tanks	FC Society Members	Sample of HH
1	Mahabubnagar Rural	Kodur	Perennial	127	40
		Gajulapeta	Seasonal	180	40
2	Boothpur	Tatikonda	Perennial	107	40
		Amistapur	Seasonal	119	40
3	Moosapet	Vemula	Perennial	114	40
		Janampet	Seasonal	132	40
4	Jadcherla	Nasurllabad	Perennial	102	40
		Aloor	Seasonal	75	40
Total				**956**	**320**

Figure 1: Location of the Study Area



About the Study area

Mahabubnagar district, popularly known as Palamuru, is in the southern part of Telangana State, India. Telangana, formed on 2 June 2014, is a predominantly inland state with diverse geographical, social and economic characteristics. The district is known for its agricultural activities, traditional occupations,

religious centres and tourist attractions, including Pillalamarri and several historically significant temples. The Krishna River and its associated water resources, along with reservoirs and irrigation tanks, play an important role in supporting agriculture and inland fisheries. According to the records of fishermen's cooperative societies, Mahabubnagar district has 464 registered fishery tanks with 11,411 registered members. In 2023, the reported water-spread area comprised 5,679 acres of perennial tanks and 27,421 acres of seasonal tanks. These water bodies provide important livelihood opportunities for fishing communities and contribute to the rural economy.

Education is an important indicator of the district's social development. According to the district's official demographic profile, the literacy rate is 63.35%, with male literacy at 73.37% and female literacy at 53.3%. The considerable gender gap in literacy highlights the need for greater educational awareness and equal opportunities, particularly among rural and economically disadvantaged communities. In this context, the educational

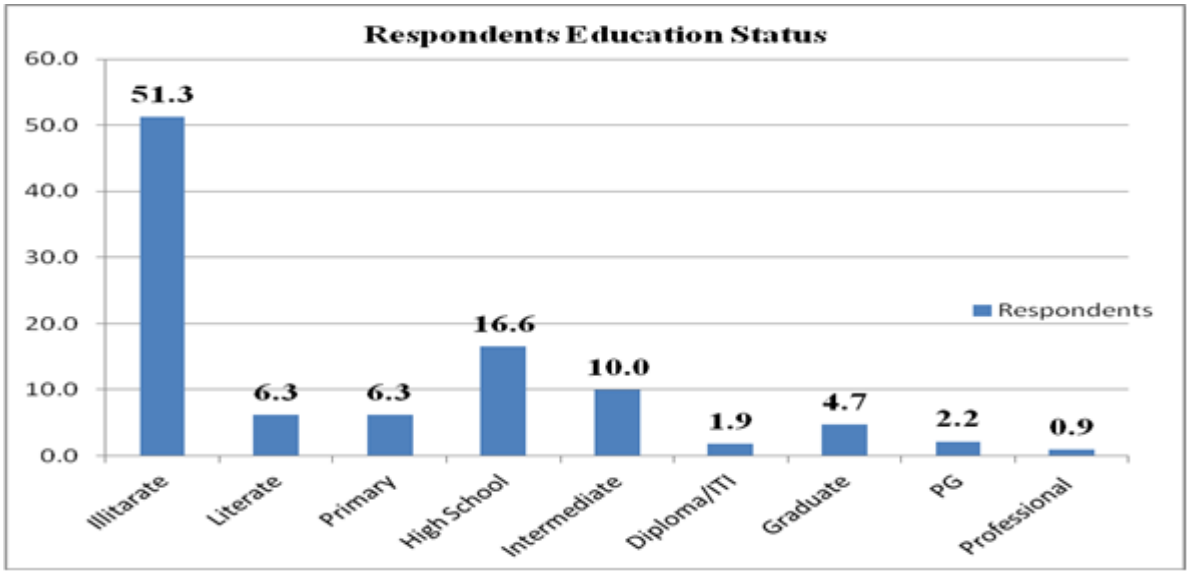
background of fishing households and parental perceptions of children's education assume particular significance. Understanding their educational aspirations, gender-related attitudes and expectations regarding higher education and employment provides insights into the relationship between traditional occupations, socioeconomic conditions and educational mobility.

Study findings

Respondents Educational Status

The study educational status primary data disclosed that more than half (51.3%) of the respondents are illiterate, while the remaining individuals are literate. Of the 320 respondents, 16 per cent had completed their high school education, 12 per cent had stopped at the primary level, 10 per cent had completed their intermediate education, and 2 per cent had finished their diploma or ITI. However, about seven per cent of members have completed a degree or higher. Of them, two per cent are postgraduate students, and five per cent have degrees. It's interesting to note that 1% of participants in the study areas have completed their professional degrees. The majority fishermen here are old and uneducated. This makes it impossible to gain the necessary skills and abilities (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Respondents Educational Level in the Study Villages



Source: Primary data

Educational Mobility

Education is an important determinant of social mobility, individual development and socioeconomic advancement. It enhances employment opportunities, income levels, social status and social recognition. Educational mobility can be understood by examining changes in educational attainment across successive generations, particularly among grandparents, parents and the present generation. In this context, the study examines intergenerational educational mobility among the fishing community to understand changes in literacy and educational qualifications over time.

The study collected data on intra- and intergenerational educational mobility of the fishing community and the age-group-wise educational qualifications of the respondents. The study reveals that the percentage of individuals who are literate in high school, intermediate, graduate and postgraduate varies across different age groups. The primary level of education is reported (257) at 80.4 percent, intermediate (38) at 11.9 percent, and above graduate (25) at 7.8 percent of the respondents. The high school level of education reported by respondents is 69 (81.2), the intermediate level of education is the highest reported, and the above-graduate group reported in the same 20–30 age group is 19.4 percent. The percentage of illiterate individuals is higher in the older age group, while the percentage of those who have graduated is higher in the respondent's age group (see Table 2). The primary data shows that illiteracy, which was as high as 98.4 percent among the grandparents, has come down by 91.2 percent among the parents of the respondents. Subsequently, there is a proportionate increase in primary education of 7.1 percent among respondents.

Table 2: Educational mobility among the three generations in the study villages

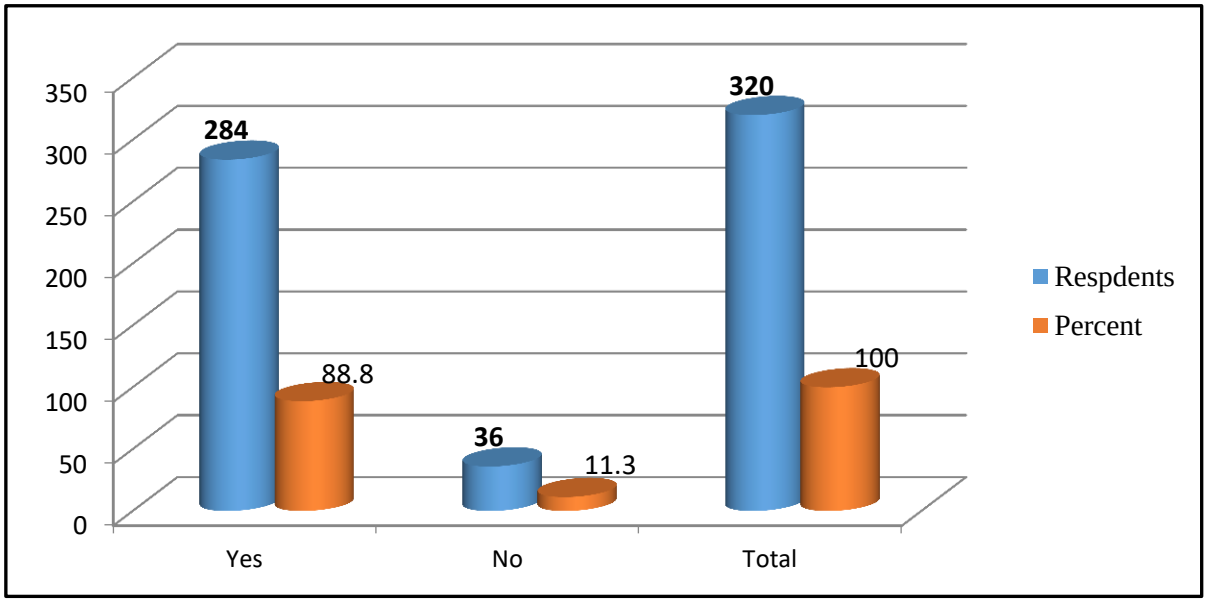
Education	Grand Parent		Parent		Respondent	
	Respondent	%	Respondent	%	Respondent	%
Illiterate	315	98.4	292	91.2	164	51.3
Literate	2	0.6	5	1.5	20	6.3
Primary	3	0.9	12	3.7	20	6.3
High school	0	0.0	7	2.1	53	16.6
Intermediate	0	0.0	3	0.9	32	10

Diploma/ITI	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	1.9
Graduate	0	0.0	1	0.3	14	4.5
Postgraduate	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	2.2
Total	**320**	**100.0**	**320**	**100.0**	**320**	**100.0**

Source: Primary data

The **parents'** generation's education gradually increased from illiterate to primary school, but the percentage of respondents with education is increasing across all levels in this community. Illiteracy has continued to decline from one generation to the next, while literacy and educational ability have risen from grandparents to parents to the present generation. When asked about the Social Mobility of people, the respondents had given different opinions on the same. The primary data indicates that 88.8 per cent of respondents accept that education is a cause of social mobility, while 11.3 per cent do not agree that education influences social mobility (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Status of respondents' opinion on Education and Social mobility



Source: Primary data

Children's Education

The primary data also explain the status of respondents' preferences and choices regarding children's education in the selected study areas. A total of 92.2 percent of respondents preferred that education be essential for both boys and girls. While only 5.3 percent of respondents opined that boys need education, a very small (2.5 percent) percentage of fishing community members said girls must need education. 93.4 percent of fishermen reported that educational institutions are available and have very easy access to children, and 6.6 percent said they had no access to children in the study villages. In today's world, every parent wants their child to attend an English-medium school. It's interesting to note that, according to the primary data, 64.7 percent of the parents prefer the English-medium school and 35.3 percent prefer the Telugu-medium school of education, which is sufficient for their children (see Table 3).

Table 3: Preferences and choices of children's education in the study villages

Preferred education			**Preferred medium of education**		
Response	**Respondents**	**%**	**Type of Medium**	**Respondents**	**%**
Yes Boys	17	5.3	English	207	64.7
Yes-Girls	8	2.5	Telugu	113	35.3
Both	295	92.2	NA	-	-
Total	**320**	**100.0**	**Total**	**320**	**100.0**

Source: Primary data

Medium of choice

Regards to the medium of choice, the parent's choice of educational institutions and medium is support for the children's socio-cultural development; it is the main aspiration as an instrument of social mobility between fishing communities (See Table 3). In today's world, every parent wants their child to attend an English-medium school. Education is the primary factor in

social and occupational mobility. The parents' educational status is desired by their children. It's interesting to note that, according to the primary data, 207 (64.7) per cent of parents prefer English-medium schools, while 113 (35.3) per cent prefer Telugu-medium schools. The respondents' choice of education for children is preferred by 92.2 per cent, boys' education by 5.3 per cent, and girls' education by 2.5 per cent.

Choice of Education Institutions

Telangana State is home to both public and private educational institutions of different types. Only Government institutions offer free education from kindergarten to postgraduate level through the following institutions. They are ZP High Schools, assisted schools, colleges and universities, Gurukulams, social welfare residential schools, and BC welfare residential schools. According to the primary data, of the 320 respondents, around 60 per cent of parents said that ZP High Schools are the preferred option for children, while 27 per cent preferred private schools. 8.4 per cent of respondents selected colleges and universities, while nearly 5 per cent indicated they were prepared to send their children to social welfare schools, BC welfare residential schools, and Gurukulams for their children's education (see Table 4).

Table 4: Choice of education for the children in the study villages

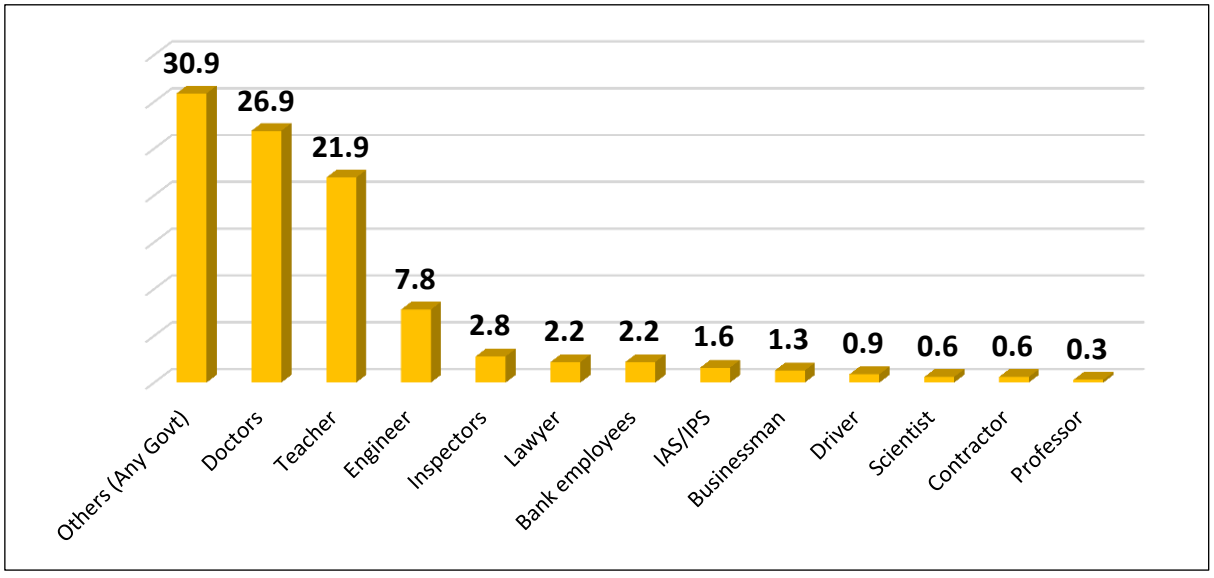
Type of School	Choice of Education for the Children			
	First Choice	Percent	Second Choice	Percent
ZP High School	189	59.1	7	2.2
Private school	86	26.9	21	6.6
Aided School	3	0.9	1	0.3
SC Residential School	5	1.6	0	0
BC Residential School	7	2.2	4	1.3
BC Gurukulams School	3	0.9	5	1.6
College/University	27	8.4	23	7.2
Total	**320**	**100.0**	**320**	**100.0**

Source: Primary data

Preferences and choices for the children's occupation

The primary data explains the respondents' preferences and choices for the children's education in their study areas. The primary data show the respondents' preferred children's summary and the percentage by profession. The respondents give importance to the profession of children. The profession of children is any government job for 99 members (30.9 per cent) and other professions are given importance to all. According to the report 26.9 percent respondents are referring to the profession of doctor, children engineers 25 (7.8 percent), teachers 70 (21.9 percent), inspectors 9 (2.8 percent), lawyers 7 (2.2 percent), bank employees 7 (2.2 percent) and respondents given priority for Scientist 2 (0.6 percent), IAS/IPS 5 (1.6 percent), Business 4 (1.3 percent) and Professor 1 (0.3 percent). Most of the respondents gave priority to their children's employment opportunities and government and other white-collar jobs but only a small percentage gave priority to driving professors and contractors (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Details of preferences on children's Occupations in the study villages



Source: Primary data

Sources of Financial Support for Children's Education

The study examines the sources of financial support for children's education among fishing community households in the selected villages of Mahabubnagar district. "Financial support is crucial to maintain continuity in children's education and enhance their prospects. According to the study, 36.5 per cent of the 320 households surveyed have savings, and 63.4 per cent do not keep any savings. Further, only 2.5 percent of households reported having investments (see Table 5).

Table 5: Details of respondents saving and investments in study villages

Item	Total Households	Response			
		Yes	percent	No	percent
Savings	320	117	36.5	203	63.4
Investments	320	8	2.5	312	97.5

Source: Primary data

Most of the respondents earn their living from fishing, agricultural labor and non-agricultural wage employment. Most of their income goes on the essentials of life in the home and there is little left over to save or invest for the future. Many families find it difficult to meet the educational expenses of their children and are unable to provide the necessary financial support, especially for higher education. The limited savings and financial insecurity of households in fishing communities have important implications for children's educational opportunities.

Families with insufficient savings may find it difficult to meet the rising cost of education, which may impact on children's ability to continue with their studies and to have access to higher education. Sometimes, financial problems force children to leave school and engage in some income-generating activities to support their families. Hence, the findings suggest the need for greater institutional support in the form of educational scholarships, fee reimbursement, financial aid and other targeted welfare measures. Such interventions can reduce financial burden on fishing community households and strengthen educational opportunities and socio-economic advancement of the next generation.

Summary and Conclusion

The study examines the educational conditions of fishing communities in selected villages of Mahabubnagar district, Telangana. The findings show that children's education is closely linked to their families' economic conditions. Most households belong to the BPL category and depend on fishing, agriculture and wage labour for their livelihood. Low and irregular incomes make it difficult for parents to meet educational expenses. While some families use their savings to support their children's education, many have little or no savings to fall back on. Meeting the costs of fees, books, uniforms, transport and higher education remains a major challenge, particularly for those wishing to pursue professional or skill-based courses. The study also points to the need for better educational support for these families. Scholarships, fee reimbursement, hostel facilities, free study materials and career guidance can help reduce the financial burden on parents. Special attention should be given to girls and first-generation learners. Encouraging higher education, skill development and alternative employment among young people can also help reduce poverty and dependence on traditional occupations. Overall, education is essential for improving the living conditions of fishing communities and creating better opportunities for the next generation.

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