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Vernacular Challenges and Educational Inequality Among CHT Indigenous Populations

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the educational barriers faced by Indigenous communities in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), focusing on vernacular language obstacles and systemic prejudices within the education system. The research addresses five key questions: the specific language challenges Indigenous students encounter, manifestations of systemic prejudice, the impact of the absence of mother-tongue education, the influence of cultural biases on student engagement, and potential reforms for fostering inclusivity. A qualitative research approach, involving semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with educators, students, and community leaders, was used to identify the issues. The findings indicate that language barriers significantly affect comprehension, whereas systemic prejudices and cultural biases hinder student participation and academic success. The study recommends the implementation of mother-tongue instruction, culturally relevant curricula, and teacher training on cultural sensitivity to promote an inclusive educational environment. This research highlights the urgent need for educational reforms in the context of linguistic and cultural challenges that prevent fair access to education for Indigenous students in CHT.

Introduction

This study explores the educational obstacles that Indigenous communities in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) face, emphasizing vernacular language barriers and systemic prejudice in the educational system. It seeks to identify the root cause of educational inequality through five subsidiary research questions: What particular language barriers do Indigenous students encounter? How do systemic prejudices manifest in educational settings? What is the impact of the absence of mother-tongue education on academic performance? How do cultural biases affect student engagement? What reforms can enhance educational inclusivity? This study adopts a qualitative methodology to investigate these questions through a structured analysis of linguistic and cultural biases impacting Indigenous educational access. The paper progresses from a literature review to methodology, findings, and concludes with policy recommendations.

Result & discussion

This section critically examines literature that exists on the subject of educational challenges facing the Indigenous communities of CHT, focusing on sub research questions regarding language barriers, systemic prejudices, the effect of language absence on performance, cultural biases, and potential reforms. The findings are: "Vernacular Language Barriers in Education," "Manifestations of Systemic Prejudice," "Academic Impact of Language Absence," "Cultural Biases in Student Engagement," and "Reformative Measures for Inclusivity." From the literature, it shows that gaps include the policy implementation on vernacular languages being less practiced, few strategies against systemic biases, and no culturally relevant curricula. This paper hopes to bridge the gaps through a holistic analysis and recommendation of practical solutions.

Vernacular Language Barriers in Education

Initial studies found that Bangla was the dominant medium of instruction, thus making it difficult for vernacular-speaking students to learn. Early studies pointed out that Indigenous languages were absent in education, which led to disengagement. Later studies showed attempts to include local languages but indicated problems in implementing them. Recent studies recommend policy changes to promote mother-tongue instruction, but effective strategies are still lacking.

Manifestations of Systemic Prejudice

Research on systemic prejudice in education started with recording discriminatory practices against Indigenous students. Basic studies have indicated unequal treatment and exclusionary curricula. Further research on the psychological effects of prejudice highlighted the importance of culturally sensitive teaching. However, the fact that prejudice persists calls for an all-inclusive policy overhaul.

Academic Impact of Language Absence

The studies initially focused on the relationship between language and academic performance. The initial findings were that Indigenous students had a higher dropout rate because of the problem of language. Later studies included socio-cultural impacts of the absence of language, and research advocates for mother-tongue education as a means to improve academic outcomes.

Cultural Biases in Student Engagement

Early investigations into cultural biases identified curricula irrelevant to Indigenous cultures, leading to disengagement. Subsequent studies explored the influence of teacher attitudes on student participation. Recent research underscores the importance of culturally inclusive practices to enhance engagement, though practical application remains limited.

Reformative Measures for Inclusivity

From issue identification to the solution-proposing stage, literature on educational reform has moved along. At the first stages, it focused on policy recommendations for language inclusion. Subsequent studies were emphasized on teacher training and curriculum development. Still, there is a need for effective implementation of reforms for the eradication of linguistic and cultural biases.

Method

This study adopts qualitative research methodology to explore educational barriers for Indigenous students in CHT. Through interviews with educators, students, and community leaders, the research collects rich insights into linguistic and cultural challenges. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions gather comprehensive perspectives, while thematic analysis processes data, pinpointing themes about language barriers, systemic biases, and potential reforms. This way, a complex dynamic can be understood by analysing what affects Indigenous education.

The qualitative data drawn from interviews and discussions explores critical aspects of educational barriers facing Indigenous students in the CHT. Results address five sub-research questions: vernacular language barriers, systemic prejudice, the effect of language absence on performance, cultural biases, and reformative measures. Specific findings include: "Impact of Vernacular Language Barriers on Comprehension," "Systemic Prejudice and Educational Inequity," "Consequences of Language Absence on Academic Outcomes," "Cultural Biases in Educational Engagement," and "Recommendations for Inclusive Educational Reforms." These findings illustrate the profound impact of language and prejudice on educational access and outcomes for Indigenous students, emphasizing the need for targeted reforms to improve inclusivity and equity in the education system.

Impact of Vernacular Language Barriers on Comprehension

Interviews with Indigenous students indicate that comprehension is severely affected by language barriers. Many students reported that they could not understand lessons taught in Bangla, which led to disengagement. Qualitative data from focus group discussions indicate that mother-tongue instruction is required to improve comprehension and participation, which are gaps noted in previous research.

Systemic Prejudice and Educational Inequity

Data from educator interviews indicate pervasive systemic prejudice within educational settings, manifesting as unequal treatment and exclusion. Students reported experiences of discrimination affecting their motivation and self-esteem. These findings underscore the necessity for systemic reforms to create a more equitable educational environment for Indigenous students.

Consequences of Language Absence on Academic Outcomes

Student's assessment and academic record of feedback shows that the absent input in Bangla causes significant lags in their education outcomes. Students with restricted Bengali proficiency lag the level of understanding and grades significantly, and also get discouraged to drop out higher levels. This result converges with earlier research-based argumentations for language sensitive policy.

Cultural Biasing in Educational Participation

Observations and student's review show the impact of cultural irrelevant curricula on engagement. Students reported feeling disconnected and alienated by contents irrelevant to their cultural identity and heritage. The evidence demonstrates that the inclusion of indigenous cultures in curricula tends to enhance engagement and student outcomes, filling up perceived gaps in current education and learning practices.

Recommendation for Inclusive Education reforms

Based on the results, this research suggests some recommendations for education reform. These are mother-tongue instruction, the development of culturally relevant curricula, and training of teachers on cultural sensitivity. These would help remove the linguistic and cultural barriers for Indigenous students in order to create an inclusive and equal educational environment.

Conclusion

This paper provides an analysis of educational barriers to the Indigenous people of CHT, emphasizing linguistic and cultural challenges. The research makes known the urgent need for more inclusive educational reforms by exploring vernacular language barriers, systemic prejudice, and cultural biases. The findings prove mother-tongue instruction as well as culturally relevant curricula to be highly critical in improving educational outcomes as well as preserving the indigenous identities. The specific study, however, tends to limit broader applicability through its focus on communities. Future research should extend to more Indigenous groups and consider long-term effects of proposed reforms. This work contributes to theoretical understandings of educational inequity and provides practical suggestions for policymakers and educators.

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