

Implications of Caste System on Social Development in Rural Areas of District Lodhran in Southern Punjab, Pakistan

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Received: September 21, 2017

Accepted: December 11, 2017

ABSTRACT

Caste is a social group having two characteristics of hereditary membership and endogamy. The caste system is basically a way of dividing people into different social classes. In developing societies stratified along caste, clan, or ethnic lines, social hierarchies can be particularly salient, yet their consequences for durable inequalities in opportunity have been only lightly explored. Present study focused to identify on the implications of caste system on social development in rural areas of District Lodhran. Data were collected with the help of a well-designed interview schedule. Data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used for data analysis. (59.2%) of the respondents were living in joint family system and out one-fourth i.e. (28.8%) favor the biradarism to a great extent while (39.2%) to some extent. About one-third (32.0%) of the respondents had thinking that the caste system is started from India, while about one-fourth (25.6%) of them told that caste system is started from Arabic Qabail. (48.0%) of the respondents had thinking that the group formation in their villages is the result of this caste system. As gender discrimination was probed, a majority (64.0%) of the respondents told that biradari had normal reaction if some females of their biradri/caste go to get higher education but they have different observation. More than a half (56.0%) of them had thinking 'to some extent' that rural educated people were against the biradriism. More than a half (55.2%) of them had thinking 'to some extent' that education and caste systems are the major components of social development. It was noted that all the respondents had thinking that caste system created the infrastructure for formation of social relations and interaction between peoples. A majority (64.0%) of the respondents had thinking 'to a great extent' that biradari system played an important role at local level politics.

KEY WORDS; Caste system, social development, social classes, social relations

INTRODUCTION

Hutton defined caste "a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community". Another definition of caste is, it's a status of inferior or superior rank of endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit of any social esteem in comparison with other such subdivision [1].

Biradri: It is the group of people belonging to same caste, intermarrying together. Two or more families related to each other are called biradri. People of biradri do not necessarily live at the same place. There may be different languages, styles, and customs in biradri. Old biradries having same caste are still strong in Pakistan. They have more rigid norms. Social violations in biradries are strictly condemned. Endogamy is a strict condition in some of the biradries[2].

Among Muslims as among Hindus, castes are organized locally on the basis of caste brotherhood (biradari). Those born into another caste, even though they may be on the same social level and practice the same occupation, are excluded from this brotherhood. Each brotherhood is normally governed by a committee of elders (panchayat) that has the power to settle disputes within the caste. It punishes members who break caste and dishonor the brotherhood, the worst punishment being expulsion, which traditionally entailed not only social ostracism but the loss of one's livelihood [3].

In developing societies stratified along caste, clan, or ethnic lines, social hierarchies can be particularly salient, yet their consequences for durable inequalities in opportunity have been only lightly explored. Caste identity

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is embedded in occupational differences, which are associated with status and notions of purity and pollution. Various exclusionary norms follow from these hierarchies and are exercised in relationships of mutual assistance, in social networks, and in the establishment and maintenance of political power within and outside the village economy. To the extent that a high-caste group dominates a community, it may be able (and willing) to exclude or at least discourage the low-caste group from accessing local public services [4].

Pakistan can proudly boast of having one of the oldest and the most organized caste systems in the world. This system always drew interest from the ancients to the recent sociologists. Plutarch and Homer studied it and made it a part of their ancient doctrine. Chankiya and Machiavelli added its necessary components in their celebrated works. Recently the salient features have been added in studying the covert mind control technique program of the CIA. This system has developed over centuries. However, much fine-tuning has been done to it in the last 63 years making it the envy of the nations. Under this system, society has been organized under a system of unorganized chaos. All basic groups are circling around one major group reflecting the principle of oneness of god and the principle of circling around in spheres by this whole universe. Any group who dares to move outside their circle is dealt harshly. Systems of punitive measures are set up for behavior not compliant to the set norms. Separate belief systems are established for each caste. They have their own gods. The role of each caste is pre-defined and gets the entire society into one fine-tuned system [5].

The sociological significance of the study lies in the part where attitude plays an important role in determining human social behavior and social relations. Caste system is the products of group life. It is well known that the study of group life is the focal point of sociology. Caste system is an aspect of social stratification. Social stratification is the one of the important institutions of the human society and can be found in all human societies. The sociological significance of studies becomes more necessary in a society where the social stratification is of rigid kind, i.e. caste system. The present study found out the impact of caste system on social development in rural areas of District Lodhran and also study the implications of caste system on their social life with following objectives.

Objective of the Study

Following are major objectives of the present study are;

- To study the socio-economic characteristics of respondents.
- To explore value, history and attitudes of respondents regarding caste system.
- To find out the role of education between caste system and social development.
- To explore the effect of caste system regarding social development.
- To suggest measures and recommendations for policy making.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in District Lodhran. The multistage sampling technique was used for data collection. At the first stage one tehsil (Tehsil Duniyapur) out of three tehsils was selected randomly, at the second stage two union councils i.e. UC-22 & UC-33 were selected randomly, at the third stage four villages (two from each UC) i.e. Chak No. 360/WB and 358/WB from UC-34, Chak No. 355/WB and 357/WB from UC-35 were selected randomly and at the last stage one hundred and twenty-five respondents (25 from each caste) of 5 different casts (Gujjar, Rajput, Arain, Jutt & others minor caste) were selected purposively from the selected rural areas of District Lodhran by using simple random sampling technique. The well-designed interview schedule was used for data collection. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were applied for data analysis.

RESULTS

Data analysis based on the information taken from the respondents gives the following results. A large majority (73.6%) of the respondents were male and about one-fourth (26.4%) of them were female to take gender wise instance. One-third (32.8%) of the respondents had up to 35 years of age, while a major proportion (44.0%) of the respondents belong to middle age group of (36-50), and remaining (23.2%) had above 50 years of age. Respondents were choosing through equal distribution regarding caste and five caste groups were selected i.e. Gujjar, Rajput, Arain, Jutt and the last one group belong to minor castes. Results also reveals that about one-fourth (25.6%) of the respondents were illiterate, while (20%) of them had primary-middle level education, about one-third (32.0%) of the respondents were matriculated and (22.4%) of them had above matric level education. (40.8%) of the respondents were living in nuclear family system and a majority (59.2%) of the respondents were living in joint family system. Further, about one-fourth (25.6%) of the respondents had up to Rs. 15000 monthly income from all sources, while a major proportion (45.6%) of the respondents had Rs. 15001-30000 monthly income from all sources and (28.8%) of them had above Rs.

30000 monthly income. (28.8%) of the respondents had greater favor towards biradism and (39.2%) of them had favor of biradism 'to some extent' while (32%) of them were against the biradism. Majority (71.2%) of the respondents reported that marriages in their family strictly/always contracted with caste. Perception of the respondents about discriminations on the bases of caste was also probed and respondents told with the opinion "Caste is the sequential division of society" (17.6%) agreed 'to a great extent' and (52.8%) agreed 'to some extent', whereas only (17.6%) of them had denied to respond and while (12%) of them had no knowledge about this statement. So majority of the respondents had thinking that caste is the sequential division of society. About one-fifth (19.2%) of the respondents agreed 'to a great extent' and (39.2%) of them agreed 'to some extent' with the opinion "Caste is the hierarchy", whereas only (16%) of them gave no response about this opinion while (25.6%) of them had no knowledge about this statement. Only (9.6%) of the respondents had thinking 'to a great extent' and (15.2%) of them thinking 'to some extent' that "Caste had restriction on food, dress, speech and customs", whereas about a half (52.8%) of them had no response towards this opinion while (22.4%) of them had no knowledge about this statement. Just (11%) of the respondents had thinking 'to a great extent' and (17.6%) of them thinking 'to some extent' that "Caste is pollution", whereas a major proportion (47.2%) of them had no opinion about this statement and (24%) of them had no knowledge about this opinion. Only (8%) of the respondents had thinking 'to a great extent' and (10.4%) of them thinking 'to some extent' that "Lack of unrestricted choices of occupation", whereas a substantial proportion (48.8%) of them had no opinion about this statement and (32.8%) of them had no knowledge about this opinion. About (7%) of the respondents had thinking 'to a great extent' and (12.8%) of them thinking 'to some extent' that "endogamy", whereas (16.8%) of them had no opinion about this statement while (63.2%) of them had no knowledge about this opinion. A major proportion (48%) of the respondents was found in the favor of the statement that marriages are necessary inside the castes while (41.6%) were thinking that marriages within caste is necessary for marital adjustment and (24%) of the respondents had thinking that Islam is against the biradarism. More than one-fourth (28%) of the respondents had thinking that every party in Pakistan is strongly backed by a caste while (22.4%) shared that in our society different residential localities are establishing with strong customs and well defined norms of interaction, and all these based on biradarism. About one-fourth (24.8%) of the respondents were sharing that education and caste system are the major components of social development, (35.2%) told caste system created the infrastructure for formation of social relations between peoples, (38.4%) shared caste system created the infrastructure for formation of social interactions between peoples, (8.4%) responded that caste system is still perpetuating in Pakistani society, majority i.e. (64.0%) of the respondents told biradari system played an important role at local level politics, one-third (34.4%) of the total respondents that baradari is a stronger determinant of voting behavior than party allegiance and only (18.4%) told that marriages are successful which are preceded within the biradri. (50.4%) of the respondents had thinking that caste is effective to resolve local disputes, one-fifth (20.8%) of the total respondents told that communities easily accept Panchayat (biradari) decisions, (24.8%) shares that caste system maintains law and order, (28.0%) said that caste support lower class, (30.4%) told that people had 'participation in development' due to caste system, (16.%) shared that people highlighted the problems at upper level' due to caste system and majority i.e. (72.0%) of the respondents told that biradari system plays an important role at local level politics' due to caste system. Only (16%) of the respondents told that caste system is reason of conflicts, (41.6%) told that caste system is a cause of superior thinking, only (19.2%) told that there are 'discrimination of lower caste' due to caste system, while majority (60.0%) of the respondents shared that caste system is used as a power of politics in Pakistan.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: Higher the educations of the respondents, lower will the impact of caste system on social development

Table 1: Association between education of the respondents and the impact of caste system on social development

| Education | Impact of Caste System on Social Development | | | Total |
|----------------|--|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Low | Medium | High | |
| Illiterate | 8 25.0% | 7 21.9% | 17 53.1% | 32 100.0% |
| Primary-Middle | 5 20.0% | 10 40.0% | 10 40.0% | 25 100.0% |
| Matric | 8 20.0% | 23 57.5% | 9 22.5% | 40 100.0% |
| Above Matric | 12 42.9% | 10 35.7% | 6 21.4% | 28 100.0% |
| Total | 33 26.4% | 50 40.0% | 42 33.6% | 125 100.0% |

Chi-square = 13.69

d.f. = 6

P-value = .047*

Gamma = -.250* = Significant

Table 1 represents the association between education of the respondents and their opinion about the impact of caste system on social development. Chi-square value (13.69) shows a significant association between education of the respondents and their opinion about the impact of caste system on social development. Gamma value shows a negative relationship between the variables. It means majority of the illiterate respondents had more thinking about positive impact of caste system on social development as compared to educated respondents. Above table also shows that majority (53.1%) illiterate respondents had high level thinking positive impact of caste system on social development, on the other hand only (21.4%) qualified (above matric) had thinking about positive impact of caste system on social development. So the hypothesis “Higher the education of the respondents, lower will the opinion about the impact of caste system on social development” is accepted.

[6] Caste system is a burning issue in Pakistan and every person feel proud to have believed on it. Above hypothesis is constructed to explain the relationship between the education status of the respondents and their emphasis on caste system. Because, in Pakistan, over 70% population is residing in rural areas and educational facilities in these areas are not sufficient. Therefore, less educated people have more focus on caste as compared to the educated people. As the majority people kept strong believes on caste system and this believe remained them away from the main stream of social activities, which directly impacts the social development negatively.

Hypothesis 2: Higher the incomes of the respondents, lower will the impact of caste system on social development

Table 2: Association between income of the respondents and their opinion about the impact of caste system on social development

| Income (Rs.) | Impact of Caste System on Social Development | | | Total |
|--------------|--|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Low | Medium | High | |
| Up to 15000 | 6 18.8% | 12 37.5% | 14 43.8% | 32 100.0% |
| 15001-30000 | 9 15.8% | 28 49.1% | 20 35.1% | 57 100.0% |
| Above 30000 | 18 50.0% | 10 27.8% | 8 22.2% | 36 100.0% |
| Total | 33 26.4% | 50 40.0% | 42 33.6% | 125 100.0% |

Chi-square = 15.72

d.f. = 4

*P-value = .003***

*Gamma = -.345** = Highly-Significant*

Table 2 above represents the association between income of the respondents and their opinion about the impact of caste system on social development. Chi-square value (15.72) shows a highly significant association between income of the respondents and their opinion about the impact of caste system on social development. Gamma value shows a negative relationship between the variables. It means majority of the low income respondents had more thinking about positive impact of caste system on social development as compared to high income respondents. Above table also shows that a major proportion (43.8%) low income respondents had high level thinking about positive impact of caste system on social development, on the other hand only (22.2%) high income (above 30000) had thinking about positive impact of caste system on social development. So the hypothesis “Higher the income of the respondents, lower will the opinion about the impact of caste system on social development” is accepted.

Income status of people or family is the key bone of every country or state because people take part to boost the economy directly by paying taxes. In response of this, state has the responsibility to provide the basic necessities to the people. When any state is providing all the basic facilities like health, shelter, education etc. it means common man is participating at every level. Above hypothesis is reflecting that how income level of respondents show the impact of caste system on social development. [7] Also described in his study that people having the high level of income level participating more as compared to those who have low income level. As per the analysis of data, every less number respondents said, they have high level income level while majority have lower status, so very small number of people are participating in social activities, which directly impacting the social development negatively.

DISCUSSIONS

Respondents have strong believes on caste system and they want to marry their children within caste and families because they have very strong opinions towards caste like caste is the sequential division of society or it's a hierarchy. Very small respondents are thinking that caste is pollution and it's directly destroying the social development of the society. Although Islam is against the biradarism but event that people focused on caste system

due to their ignorance and rigid cultural traditions and community is strongly backed by a caste in Pakistan. Like education, caste system is the major component of social development which created the infrastructure for formation of social relations between peoples and social interactions between peoples. Caste system is still perpetuating in Pakistani society which played an important role at local level politics to determine the voting behavior of people. Caste system is effective to resolve local disputes because people easily accept Panchayat (biradari) decisions and they also believe that that caste system maintains law and order more effectively than other decision making bodies. Believe on caste system give birth of large number of social diseases like discrimination, conflict orientation among lower and upper class people, thinking of superiority and inferiority and unlawful use of power of politics in Pakistan. Educated people said that caste is pollution for the social development of the country due to lack of unrestricted choices of occupation and marriages are necessary inside the castes for marital adjustment to reduce the rate of divorce. When caste system is discussed under the window of Islamic educations, Islamic educations found against biradarism. Moreover, it was observed that system created the infrastructure for formation of social relations between peoples, playing an important role at local level politics, it is stronger determinant of voting behavior, marriages are successful which are preceded within the biradri, caste is effective to resolve local disputes because communities easily accept Panchayat (biradari) decisions, it is maintain law and order and it promote the social development. Some criticism also observed regarding the caste system that caste system is reason of conflicts among the people at large scale because of superior thinking and discrimination towards lower caste. Illiterate respondents had high level thinking about positive impact of caste system on social development and the people having low income had high level thinking positive impact of caste system on social development.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion has been drawn on the basis of results and discussions. It was concluded that about one-third of the respondents were matriculated and a majority of the respondents were living in joint family system. It was noticed that a majority of the respondents had favor of biradriism. About one-third of the respondents had thinking that the caste system is started from India, while about one-fourth of them told that caste system is started from Arabic Qabail. A major proportion of the respondents had thinking that there is grouping in their village on caste base. A large majority of the respondents told that biradari had normal reaction if some females of their biradri/caste go to get higher education. More than a half of them had thinking 'to some extent' that rural educated people were against the biradriism. More than a half of them had thinking 'to some extent' that education and caste system is the major components of social development. It was noted that a large majority of the respondents had thinking that caste system created the infrastructure for formation of social relations and interaction between peoples. A substantial proportion of the respondents had thinking 'to a great extent' that biradari system played an important role at local level politics. Sample respondents believed that caste is effective to resolve local disputes and biradari system played an important role at local level politics. While a major proportion of the respondents had thinking that caste system is a cause of superior thinking. A significant association was found between age, education and income with their opinion about the impact of caste system on social development.

SUGGESTIONS

In the light of the findings of the present study, the research considers it his duty to give some suggestions to follow by the forth-coming researchers for achieving good and true results.

1. Education should be promoted at root level to reduce the impact of caste system.
2. Rigid thinking of the rigid people can be replaced by raising awareness among the community.
3. Law implementation and enforcing authorities should take steps regarding honor killing.
4. Awareness at community level should be necessary by using different moods.
5. Formal education and religious teachings should be provided to each one in all the areas.
6. Bad old and new customs should be replaced or rooted out from the society.
7. Justice should be assured at each level socially and legally, and within the families by the heads of different well known caste.
8. Destroying the Caste System in Pakistan is not as easy as it sounds. While a rational and educated person would assume that general population would also be rational and aware of the virulent vermin that this caste system is, it is not quite so. It has become a part of their lives and their mindset. And to destroy a mindset and create a new one is not an easy task, for it changes the definition of the world that they have grown up in.
9. As far as the Govt. is concerned, there are some things that a Democratic country like Pakistan can promote, but not force onto its people. Destroying Caste System is one of them.

10. A mere introduction of policies or new ideology does not help in changing the mindset of people. One need to Preach, Practice & Believe in the idea one is trying to spread.

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