

Education-The Inclusive Growth Strategy for Women Empowerment in Indian Context

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Abstract

In Indian economy, the Five Year plans have generally been the fountainheads of policy for growth. Globally inclusive growth is necessary for sustainable development and equitable distribution of wealth and prosperity. This orientation is most visibly manifested in the theme of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan. Inclusive growth adopts a long term perspective and is concerned with sustained growth. For growth to be sustained in the long run, it should be broad-based across sectors and different sections of the society. Keeping the theme 'Empowerment of Women' of Tenth Five Year Plan, the inclusive growth approach takes a longer term perspective if it is viewed through women empowerment in terms of economic status of women and its relationship with education. Any analysis of Indian society without taking caste into consideration is not complete. The present paper examines interrelationship among women development in terms of economic status of women, caste and level of education and finally view the inclusive growth in India. The study highlights the relationship between education level and economic status of women only in high caste group and focuses if education is to have a central role in relation to achieving 'inclusive growth' for the women in Indian society then there needs to be a fundamental rethinking on the provisioning of education in India.

Keywords: Inclusive Growth, Women Empowerment, Economic Status of Women, Education

1. Introduction

The Indian economy, which has over the last six decades passed through various phases of growth, is now all set to enter an altogether different orbit: one marked by a high rate of expansion, combined with 'inclusive growth.' The term, Inclusive growth by its very definition implies an equitable allocation of resources with benefits accruing to every section of society, which is a utopian concept. But the allocation of resources must be focused on the intended short and long terms benefits and economic linkages at large and not just equitable mathematically on some regional and population criteria. Consistent with this definition, 'inclusive growth' is a process, in which, economic growth, measured by a sustained expansion in GDP, contributes to an enlargement of the scale and scope of all four dimensions:

1. Opportunity: Is the economy generating more and varied ways for people to earn a living and increase their incomes over time?
2. Capability: Is the economy providing the means for people to create or enhance their capabilities in order to exploit available opportunities? In other words, enable the individual to take advantage of opportunities. The 'capability' dimension clearly relates to education and skill creation.
3. Access: Is the economy providing the means to bring opportunities and capabilities together? In other words, people having access to jobs or education.
4. Security: Is the economy providing the means for people to protect themselves against a temporary or permanent loss of livelihood.

The findings in the Growth Report: Strategies for Sustained Growth and Inclusive Development (Commission on Growth and Development, 2008). The commission notes that inclusiveness – a concept that encompasses equity, equality of opportunity, and protection in market and employment transitions – is an essential ingredient of any successful growth strategy. As inclusive growth is necessary for sustainable development and equitable distribution of wealth and prosperity," says Sunil Kant Munjal, chairman, CII Mission for Inclusive Growth.

This orientation is most visibly manifested in the theme of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, which runs from 2007 to 2012. The theme is 'towards faster and more inclusive growth,' which clearly reflects the need to find a sustainable balance between growth and inclusion. In India the Five Year plans have generally been the fountainheads of policy for growth. Each Five Year Plan is running with integrated approach to the objective of the preceding one. Thus, keeping the spirit of Ninth Five Year Plan 'Empowerment of Women', Tenth Five year Plan stressed Economic Empowerment as one of the sector-specific 3-fold strategy for empowering women with the ultimate objective of making all potential women economically

independent and self-reliant. All the government initiatives for women empowerment are focused on improving her socio-economic status. Hence economic status of women is one of the important aspects of women empowerment through which we can assess both the quantitative and qualitative aspect of women empowerment. Further keeping the same spirit the theme of Tenth Five year plan can be well integrated with the Eleventh Plan.

In fact, any national development strategy that emphasizes human development essentially begins with the women education. In fact, the proportion of women is high among the poor and illiterate persons which are retarding the effort to expedite development process. So investing in education plays a key role in meeting the World Bank's social development objectives, which support inclusive growth. Professor Amartya Sen recently emphasized education as an important parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy. Thus education is another important variable, which determines not only the economic status of women but also it is important component of the Inclusive growth. "There is in our time no well educated literate population that is poor; there is no illiterate population that is other than poor." (John Kenneth Galbraith)

This simple but forceful message reiterates that education alone can be the salvation for poverty, and upliftment of the socially discriminated. In a populous country like India where even with education life is difficult, there can be little hope without it.

Many of the issues and constraints surrounding the interpretation and implementation of inclusive education encountered in the Indian context are not unique to India. Caste system is one of the most important social institutions of India and almost all activities economic, political, educational and socio-cultural revolve around the notion of caste. The context-specificity of this socio-religious construct is a factor that cannot be ignored when looking at the implications for the future of any aspect of life in India. However, the caste system will not disappear overnight, but it is a highly constructed world within which all implications must be considered and all potential change would take place Davis (1973) analysis 'India is home to diverse group of people characterized by different languages, customs, traditions, religions, and life style of habits'. So any analysis of Indian society without taking caste into consideration is not complete. Hence keeping the spirit of tenth five year plan the inclusive growth approach takes a longer term perspective if it is viewed through women empowerment in terms of economic status of women of different caste group and its relationship with education. So for inclusive growth perspective it is necessary to elevate the economic status of women of different caste group through education. There is need to formulate inclusive growth strategy for women empowerment with respect to education of the different caste group as policies for inclusive education is an important component of most government strategies for sustainable growth

2. Research Methodology

This exploratory study was based on two types of data, namely, primary and secondary. The major source of primary data obtained through interviews, which was based on pretested and carefully prepared questionnaire. The secondary data obtained from various departments and institutes. The other sources of secondary data were obtained from published and unpublished material, books, reports and reputed journals from different resources. In this study, 450 women were taken as respondents. For the purpose of this study, caste has been classified into three major groups:

1. Upper caste: Brahmin, Rajputs, Baniyas, Kayasthas, Jains etc.
2. Intermediate caste: Ahirs, Sunars, Kurmi, Yadavs, etc.
3. Lower Caste: Disadvantaged Castes like Bhangi, Pasi, the caste system also prevails in different brand of tribes, like, Santhals, Bhils, Meena, Gonds, Nundas, Nagas, Khasis, Rans, Goros, etc.

150 respondents were taken from each group, with the help of judgment or purposive sampling method. They equally represent the rural and urban area of the Ajmer District of Rajasthan.

3. Result analyses

3.1 Economic Status

In the present study the word 'Economic Status' has been used in terms of aggregate of Material Economic Status (MES) and Abstract Economic Status (AES).

$$\text{Economic Status (TES)} = \text{MES} + \text{AES}$$

Where:

MES = Family Income level + Ownership of Land and House + Possession of Vehicle + Telephone Usage + Loan facility availed + Investments made + Savings + Employment Status.

AES = Headship of the family + Economic Decision-making Power + Non- Economic Decision-making Power + Sharing of household responsibilities + Distribution of Personal Income.

But the purpose of the research work was to assess individual economic status not the family economic status, thus abstract economic status have been given more weightage than material economic status.

After considering all the elements of MES and AES, they are coded. Economic Status (TES) measured by adding both the dimensions, MES and AES. TES of the respondents is assumed to be distributed normally. So the TES of the respondents are divided in to three categories, below average, average, above average levels. The lower and upper limits of average level have been calculated on the formula

$$\begin{aligned} \text{The lower limit of average level} &= M - 1\sigma \\ \text{The upper limit of average level} &= M + 1\sigma \end{aligned}$$

Source: Dr. A.B. Bhatnagar and Dr. (Mrs.) Meenakshi Bhatnagar (1992);
'Measurement and Evaluation', P. 116-120.

Table 1 and figure a brings out that in the survey maximum respondents 68.9% score Medium TES. Only 15.1% respondents come in Low and 16.0% respondents have High TES.

3.2 Level of Education

A person aged 7 years and above who can both read and write with understanding in any language is treated as literate. However, all children of the age 6 years or less even if going to school and pickup reading and writing are treated as illiterate. Literacy rate of population is defined as the percentage of literate to the total population aged 7 years and above.

$$\text{Literacy rate} = \frac{\text{number of literate} \times 100}{\text{Population aged 7+}}$$

The female literacy rate in any country indicates the basic educational background of women in particular and their comparative position in relation to men's educational status in general. It also reveals the expected scenario in terms of educationally determined employment opportunities, which would, available to women and the proportion of them who would indeed avail these opportunities. Women's low literacy rate stands as a testimony of their low status.

In the present research work the educational level of the respondents has divided into six categories: illiterates, Functional literates (read and write without any help of formal education), Primary and Middle level, Secondary and Senior Secondary, Graduates, Post Graduates/Diploma/other degree holders.

Table 2 reveals that the literacy level of the respondents. It shows that 46.4% respondents are illiterate. 29.8% respondents have studied till primary and middle level. 7.1% respondents are graduates and 5.3% are post graduates or degree holders. So the literacy level among the respondents is very low.

3.3 Relationship among Economic Status of Women, Caste and Level of Education

3.3.1 Caste and Literacy level

By observing relationship between caste and literacy level, it can be traced out that literacy rate is high in which caste.

Table3 presents that high caste has highest literacy rate (82%). Illiteracy is maximum (45.5%) in middle caste. Middle literacy level i.e. secondary and senior Secondary is also maximum (77.8%) in high caste. The same trend is seen in high literacy level as 81.3% graduates and 95.8% P.G./Diploma holders are of high caste. Thus, it can be concluded that in high caste not only literacy rate is highest and maximum graduate and P.G./Diploma holders are belong to high caste.

3.3.2 Relationship among High Caste, Economic Status of Women and Literacy Level

Table 4 that in high caste maximum respondents (47.1%) and (38.1%) respectively of Low and Medium economic status, are primary/middle educated. Maximum respondents of High economic status are graduate (32.1%) and P.G./Diploma (42.9%) holders. Thus, in the high caste the High economic status exists among the respondents having graduate and PG/ Diploma literacy level.

3.3.3 Relationship among Middle Caste, Economic Status of Women and Literacy Level

Table 5 reveals that the middle caste maximum respondents of Low economic status (51.9%), of Medium economic status (63.8%) and of High economic status (77.7%) are illiterates. As well as the high literacy level among middle caste is nearly nil. Thus, it can be seen that in middle caste respondents majority are illiterates in all levels of economic status.

3.3.4 Relationship among Lower Caste, Economic Status of Women and Literacy Level

Table 6 shows that the similar trend (of Middle Caste) can be traced out in lower caste. Here also maximum respondents of Low economic status (45.8%) and of Medium economic status (58.0%) and of High economic status (69.2%) are illiterate as shown in table 6 reveals High literacy level is also nil in all level of economic status.

3.4 Regression Test

Regression coefficient of Three Castes

Type	Significance value	Regression coefficient
1. Relationship among High Caste, Economic Status of Women and Level of Education	0.000	3.888
2. Relationship among Middle Caste, Economic Status of Women and Level of Education	0.693	No relationship
3. Relationship among Lower Caste, Economic Status of Women and Level of Education	0.092	No relationship

There is significant relationship among economic status of women, caste and literacy level only in high caste.

4.0 Main Observations

From above data analysis it can be summarized as:

- Literacy rate is highest in the respondents of high caste.
- Illiteracy is maximum in the respondents of Middle caste.
- Graduates and P.G./Diploma holders (high literacy level) are maximum in high caste.
- Maximum respondents of high economic status have corresponding high literacy level (Graduate and PG Diploma) in high caste.
- There is significant relationship among economic status of women, caste and literacy level only in high caste.
- There is the impact of the literacy on the economic status of women only in the high caste.
- Thus the above finding supports that literacy level is playing a significant important role in relation to economic status of women and caste only in the high caste.

In middle caste and lower caste, high literacy level is nearly nil in all levels of economic status. Looking to the impact of literacy level on the economic status of women only in the high caste, here not only it can be assumed that literacy is affecting economic status of women at high literacy level not at the primary or middle level in the present study but also that education is affecting the economic status of women only of high caste but not of the middle and lower caste.

Chirmulay, Bhagwat and etal (1996) observe from a recent study that covered over three thousand household each from selected rural areas from five states of India, viz. Karnataka, Maharastra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are:-

- Educational levels were higher among higher castes and lowest among scheduled caste or tribe

children.

- Poverty adversely influences the education of the child, as it often necessitates migration.
- Domestic work load adversely affects education of the girl child, and
- Educational level of women members in the household, helped in girl child education.

Even the census of India 2011 reveals that only 74.4% of Indian people are literate (82.14 percent men and 65.46 percent women). Literacy rate in the states of Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh are below than average literacy rate according to 2011 census. For ST/SC students the figures are even below 24% (2001). Where as the rising enrolment (96.5% of children in the 6 to 14 age group) in elementary schools is a source of satisfaction, there is concern about the percentage of students actually attending school and those dropping out of the education system altogether. Though dropout rates at the elementary education stage have declined over the years, they are still relatively high especially in the case of girl students for whom the rates are 42% and 58% at the primary and upper primary stages respectively. Even a large proportion of the child labourers belong to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe community working in unorganized sector. Many of them again are girls which are the neglected and deprived lot. These children are often referred to as “no-where children” neither on account of the fact that they show up neither in labour statistics nor at schools. Actually with meager income, many parents with four or five school-going children on an average find it difficult to spend equally for the schooling needs of all children. So the variations of choices emerge, namely educate one child, withdraw the girl child, push the better performing child to another level or let the girls continue in government schools and move the boys to hostels. These are the extra costs among all the factors that deter the poorest from accessing schools even if they are in the same village.

5.0 Future Directions

If education is to have a central role in relation to achieving ‘inclusive growth’ there needs to be a fundamental rethinking on the provisioning of education. Inclusive education is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students. Here ‘presence’ is concerned with where children are educated, and how reliably and punctually they attend; ‘participation’ relates to the quality of their experiences whilst they are there and, therefore, must incorporate the views of the learners themselves; and ‘achievement’ is about the outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results. Inclusive education also involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement. If women empowerment of different caste through inclusive education is to be the way forward then this indicates the moral responsibility to ensure that women in general and those women groups that are statistically most at risk are carefully monitored, and that, where necessary, steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement in the education system and also the expansion of financial resources to this direction. These resources must also be firmly linked to an educational policy that has an established set of procedures for public consultation which will result in negotiation and consensus of the principles and processes to ensure UEE and other national educational goals.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Mid-day Meal Programme are key programmes of Government to ensure that all children complete basic schooling. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an effort to universalize elementary education by community ownership of the school system. One of the principle concerns in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is to provide basic education to the girls those belonging to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minorities. The programme recognizes the need for special efforts to bring all out-of-school girls including girls belonging to the SC/ST minority communities to school. This would require a proper identification of out-of-school girls and children from disadvantaged sections of society. Free education for all children between the age of 6 to 14 years has been made a fundamental right under the Act 2009. SSA norms should be modified to align them with the requirement of RTE Act 2009.

The NPEGEL is an important component of the SSA, a focused intervention of the government of India to reach the ‘Hardest to Reach’ girls. In such schemes it is necessary that the targets to achieve should not be spelt out only in terms of enrolment and retention of girl students, but also in terms of their relative achievement and performance at all levels and in all subjects. It must be realized that the education of girls has to be ensured and supported beyond the elementary level.

Saakshar Bharat is introduced in the context of the Government’s overall policy aimed at empowerment of women and in recognition of the fact that literacy is a prerequisite for socio-economic development. The programme is in its first phase but the success depends on its further expansion, proper execution and implementation.

Common School System means the National System of Education that is founded on the principles and values enshrined in the Constitution and provides education of a comparable quality to all children in an equitable manner irrespective of their caste, creed, language, gender, economic or ethnic background, location or disability (physical or mental), and wherein all categories of schools – i.e. government, local body or private, aided or unaided, or otherwise. The state should pursue the common school system as the key strategy for preventing commercialism and exploitation of education and making good quality education available to all students in all schools at affordable fees as a primary commitment of the Common School system. The outcome of education should be measured in terms of literacy, innumeracy and in essential life skills.

Contact members, Village Education Committee, Mahila Mandals and NGO's actively working for girls' education (if any) to organize special enrolment drive such as Ma-Beti Melas for enrolling girls at primary and upper primary levels especially those girls belonging to SC/ST, minorities and other disadvantaged groups. Make parents aware about various incentives given by Central/State Governments and NGOs to school going girls especially girls belonging to SC/ST, minorities and other disadvantaged groups e.g. merit scholarships, residential facilities, Balika Shivir, KGBVetc.

Accountability is the key task for ensuring achievement of education goals. Village/local area grant/scheme should be linked to the progress of school education of that area to ensure close involvement of local community towards children education. Local education committee should be formed at all location consisting of members of the village panchayat, village primary school, local youth/local women's group and members from community based non-government organizations. This body should not only supports government efforts by ensuring enrolment and attendance, providing assistance to teachers, contributing to the development of infrastructure, ensuring grants/schemes are used efficiently and ensuring that children get quality education.

The establishment of at least one primary school near the habitation (within 1 Km), the proper follow up revised norms of pupil teacher ratio (PTR) and teacher classroom ratio, the availability of basic school infrastructure are the basic requirement to ensure proper participation of students to school. Teacher related issues like vacancies, absenteeism, untrained teachers, inefficient training, needs to be handled on priority.

Gender parity in education is one of the most important gap to be filled in Indian context. Because this widely affects the socio-eco status of women. Special Interventions are required to bring about change in attitude. There is great need to avoid gender based allocation of activities under Work Education or work experience e.g. cooking, sewing work for girls and maintenance of electrical gadgets for boys. Society need to discourage gender based participation of children in games, sports and cultural activities organized in and outside the school.

Dignity of work in all walks of life should be reflected through exercises projecting computation of time, labour and energy consumed at each job. Highlighting of growing role of women/girls in all type of work like traders, sales girl, pilot, petrol pump, scientist, politics, etc will give impetus to change in attitude towards girls in all strata of society especially in marginal groups. This further helps in unshackling caste system in Indian context.

The incentives offered for promotion of girls' education need to be revised and the measures taken need to be of such nature, force and magnitude that they are able to overcome the obstacles posed by factors such as poverty, domestic/ sibling responsibilities, girl child labour, low preference to girls' education, preference to marriage over education of the girl child, etc.

The discrimination in subject choice available to girls is common. The rationale for having the choice of Elementary Mathematics and Home Science, and other 'womanly' optional subjects stems from the need to respond to 'demand'. School should play reformatory role and create 'demand' for more rewarding subjects and not only passively respond to demand. These practices perpetuate the gender disadvantage. The girls should be given opportunity to opt for rewarding subject which can help them in getting jobs. This process will help a lot in reversing the bias in girls' education. A number of courses and subjects are now being promoted in the name of relevance. For instance, reproductive health, safe motherhood, etc., what is not realized is that it is equally important for boys to understand basics of parenting etc. Such courses need to be introduced for both boys and girls, making it compulsory for both. It would also help break the established notion that care and parenting are only the mothers' responsibilities.

A lot of efforts are required in gender sensitization. Genuine mobilization based on participative involvement of community leaders, NGO's, SHG, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Urban Local Bodies, education administrators, teachers and local officials, parents need to be pursued consistently over a long time is must to bring about attitude change in the different strata of society.

Special interventions should be planned looking into the reasons for low education in specific area and caste group. These interventions should be specific to particular area. The interventions like free books, school uniform, alternative transport system for poor students, scholarship and sponsorship for girls' education,

campaigns against child labour in particular girl child, proper implementation of mid day meal scheme, residential facility for girls child, etc to overcome specific bottlenecks in preventing girls' from education in specific area or caste group.

An independent national authority should be immediately put in place for monitoring the appropriations of the allocated budgetary resources on school education by the concerned governments at all levels.

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Table-1 Economic Status (TES)

TES	Frequency	Percentage
Low (Below 56)	68	15.1
Medium (56-84)	310	68.9
High (Above 84)	72	16.0
Total	450	100.0

Table 2 Literacy level of the Respondents

Literacy Levels	Frequency	Percentage
illiterate	209	46.4
Functional	33	7.3
Primary/Middle	134	29.8
Secondary/Sr. Secondary	18	4.0
Graduates	32	7.1
Post Graduates/Diploma/	24	5.3
Others Degree Holders		
Total	450	100

Table 3 Caste and Literacy Level

Caste	Literacy Levels						Literacy Rate
	Illiterate	Functional Literate	Primary / Middle	Sec./ Sr. Secondary	Graduate	P.G./ Diploma	
High Caste	27 (12.9%)	8 (24.2%)	52 (38.8%)	14 (77.8%)	26 (81.3%)	23 (95.8%)	82%
Middle Caste	95 (45.5%)	19 (57.6%)	30 (22.4%)	2 (11.1%)	4 (12.5%)	-	36.7%
Lower Caste	87 (41.6%)	6 (18.2%)	52 (38.8%)	2 (11.1%)	2 (6.2%)	1 (4.2%)	42%
Total	209 (100%)	33 (100%)	134 (100%)	18 (100%)	32 (100%)	24 (100%)	

Table 4 High Caste, Economic Status and Literacy level

Economic Status	Literacy Levels						Total
	Illiteracy	Functional Literate	Primary / Middle	Sec./ Sr. Secondary	Graduate	P.G./ Diploma	
Low	4 (23.5%)	1 (5.9%)	8 (47.1%)	1 (5.9%)	1 (5.9%)	2 (11.7%)	17 (100%)
Medium	22 (20.9%)	7 (6.7%)	40 (38.1%)	11 (10.5%)	16 (15.2%)	9 (8.6%)	105 (100%)
High	1 (3.6%)	-	4 (14.3%)	2 (7.1%)	9 (32.1%)	12 (42.9%)	28 (100%)

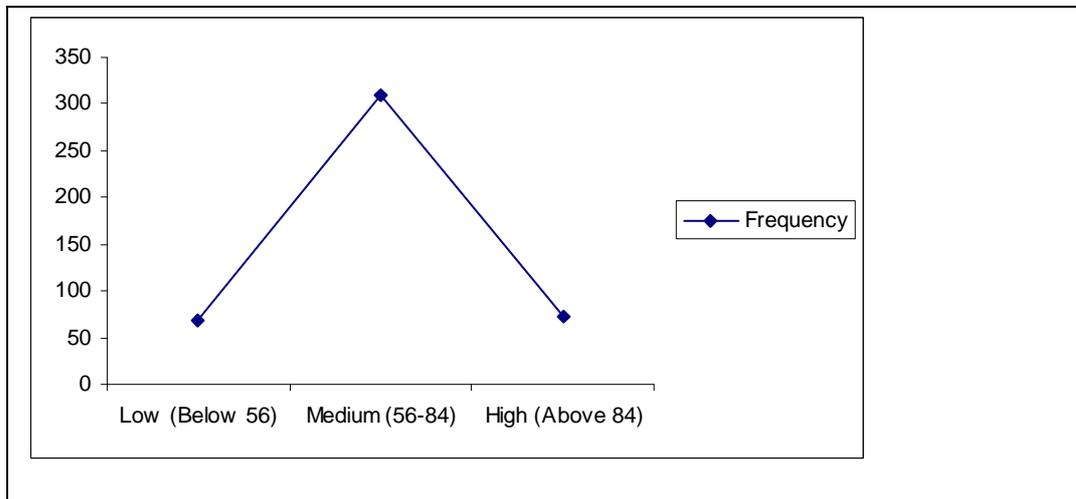
Table 5 Middle Caste, Economic Status and Literacy level

Economic Status	Literacy Levels						Total
	Illiteracy	Functional Literate	Primary / Middle	Sec./ Sr. Secondary	Graduate	P.G./ Diploma	
Low	14 (51.9%)	5 (18.5%)	8 (29.6%)	-	-	-	27 (100%)
Medium	67 (63.8%)	13 (12.4%)	20 (19.0%)	2 (1.9%)	3 (2.9%)	-	105 (100%)
High	14 (77.7%)	1 (5.6%)	2 (11.1%)	-	1 (5.6%)	-	18 (100%)

Table 6 Lower Caste, Economic Status and Literacy level

Economic Status	Literacy Levels						Total
	Illiteracy	Functional Literate	Primary / Middle	Sec./ Sr. Secondary	Graduate	P.G./ Diploma	
Low	11 (45.8%)	-	11 (45.8%)	2 (8.4%)	-	-	24 (100%)
Medium	58 (58.0%)	5 (5.0%)	35 (35.0%)	-	2 (2.0%)	-	100 (100%)
High	18 (69.2%)	1 (3.8%)	6 (23.2%)	-	-	1 (3.8%)	26 (100%)

Figure a : Economic Status (TES)



Mean value: 70.1533
Std. Deviation: 14.0180

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