

## Impact of Mid- Day Meal Scheme on Enrollment and Retention of Elementary Level Students of Different Social Classes

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### Abstract

*Students associated with various social classes have got marginalized apropos access to education. The scheme like mid-day meal was intended to address these problems. School statistics assists to replicate over the slant of development in enrollment and retention rates of students that belong to different social classes in India. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used in which primary and secondary data was subjected to analysis. Information blank in a modified form supported by interviews with teachers and students were used as a tool for collection of data. Data collection was performed through simple random sampling technique. A sample of 80 schools was drawn from a total population of 209 elementary schools of the district Srinagar. Analysis of data divulges that mid-day meal scheme has optimistic effect on access of all the social classes like General Category, SC, ST and OBC in Srinagar even confirms an identical trend for fluctuation of enrollment and retention. While some of the extraneous factors were also identified that halt the progress and expected outcomes of the scheme.*

**Keywords:** social class, enrollment, retention, fluctuation, extraneous factors, etc.

### Introduction

A number of schemes were launched in the primary education sector by authorities to reach the deprived section. Access to primary education was universalized through flagship program of government in the name of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), despite its successful implementation; a few children were still seen underprivileged of primary education due to their poor economic background<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, authorities among the developing countries instituted an array of policies which focused on enhancing of school enrollment. Provision of school meal is one among those that is believed to increase the enrolment. Access and equity go hand to hand and ensure Universal Elementary Education (UEE). Mostly all schemes and programs aim at bridging the social and gender gaps with respect to the enrollment, retention and educational outcomes at elementary level. Extraordinary intercession approach have been adopted for the inclusion of girls, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe students, working students, children with special needs, urban disadvantaged children, children from minority section, children belonging

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1. Kainth, 2006

to the families of *Below Poverty Line* (BPL), migrant children and children belonging to the hardest-to-reach areas, into the mainstreaming. These are certainly those children who have earlier remained very much isolated from education; this seems to be at greater risk from dropping out even after being admitted, if extraordinary attention would not be paid to the issue<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, as the *Sachar Committee Report* has pointed out the situation of children from the Muslim minority community seems to be even worse than that of SCs and STs<sup>2</sup>. A number of steps were taken in the recent past years that aimed at bridging the gender gaps, ending the social caste inequalities and ending the contrast of rural and urban labeling among student. **Nath & Nath (2015)** concluded that parents were found more attracted to send their wards to the school. After the introduction of Mid-Day Meal Scheme, there is an increment in the percentage of retention in schools. The Headman opined that they are in support of the continuation of scheme. The Mid-Day Meal Program helped in increasing the attendance and enrolment of the students particularly coming from economically weaker families. **Penisetty (2015)** stated that due to the implementation of the scheme it can be clearly reflected that scheme has positively affected the enrolment, attendance and gender equity at elementary school education level. It also affected the retention level, learning ability and inclusion. Teachers however observed that Scheme is showing some positive results regarding learning ability and academic achievement. It also brought about social integrity and social equity among students. Scheme is more affective in the areas where there are poor families as compared to the areas with elite classes. **Jan (2014)** carried out a study regarding mid-day meal scheme in district Pulwama, of Jammu and Kashmir, and revealed that scheme has a significant positive effect on enrollment of students, their retention in schools and relatively high growth of female enrollment at elementary level. The study found that mid-day meal scheme has created a positive effect with respect to enrollment, attendance and retention. Scheme is also proved to be a great support, especially to the families of weak socio-economic background. From the access point of view, scheme has played a vital role in bringing up social equity among students.

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1. Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2008
  2. GoI, 2006a

**Bonds (2012)** revealed that school meal programs were highly victorious in enhancing the enrollments particularly for the students coming from poor socio-economic backgrounds. This confirmation reiterates the optimistic effect of school meal programs on educational fallouts, and expects hopeful results in other areas as well. Analysis of data under study highly indicates number of significant factors of program participation. The effect of scheme is found more positive on girls as compared to the boys, similarly the scheme has proven good for the rural students as compared to urban students.

### **Delimitation of the study**

1. The study is delimited to the elementary schools.
2. The study is delimited to district Srinagar of Jammu and Kashmir.
3. The study is delimited to the 209 schools of district Srinagar.

### **Methodology**

The present study aimed at assessing the effect of mid-day meal scheme regarding the enrollment and retention of different social classes at elementary level in district Srinagar which was carried out through a quantitative approach followed by a qualitative component. The present study was conducted using a descriptive survey method.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of the study was all the government and government aided elementary schools as well as EGS/AIE Centers of district Srinagar. The total population of study was 209 Elementary schools in district Srinagar<sup>1</sup>. For having a representative and easy sampling procedure district Srinagar could be divided into eight educational zones, researcher then selected 10 schools from each educational zone using a simple random sampling method which comprises of total 80 schools. The source for the data used for the study is primary as well as secondary.

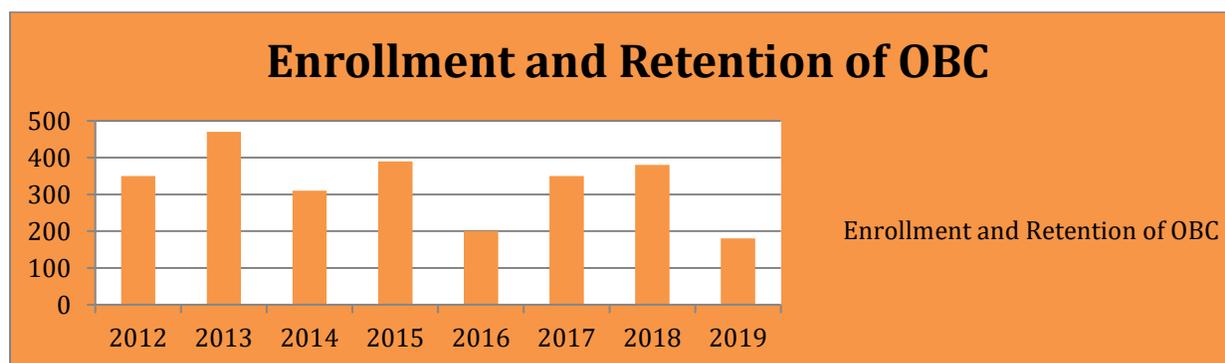
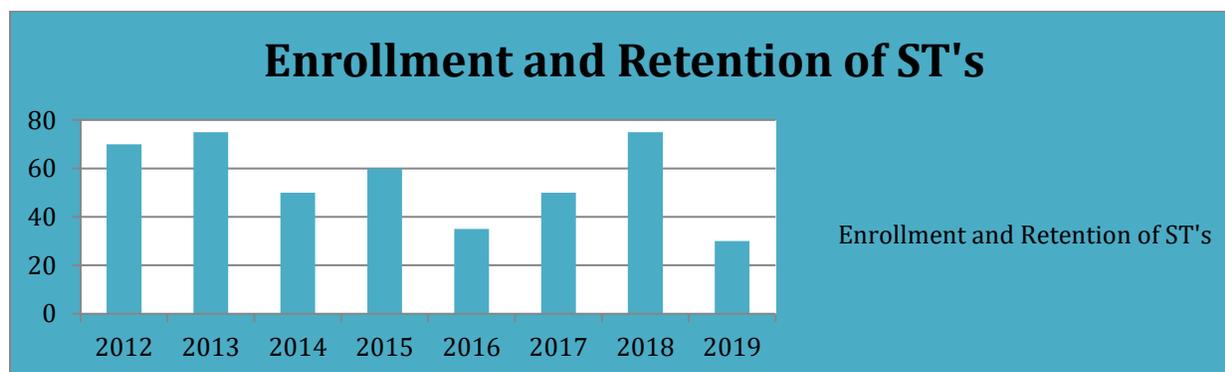
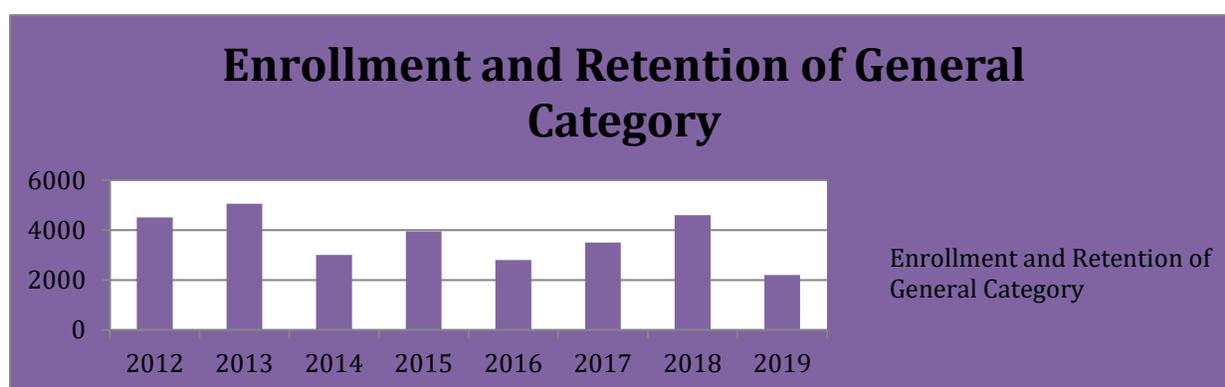
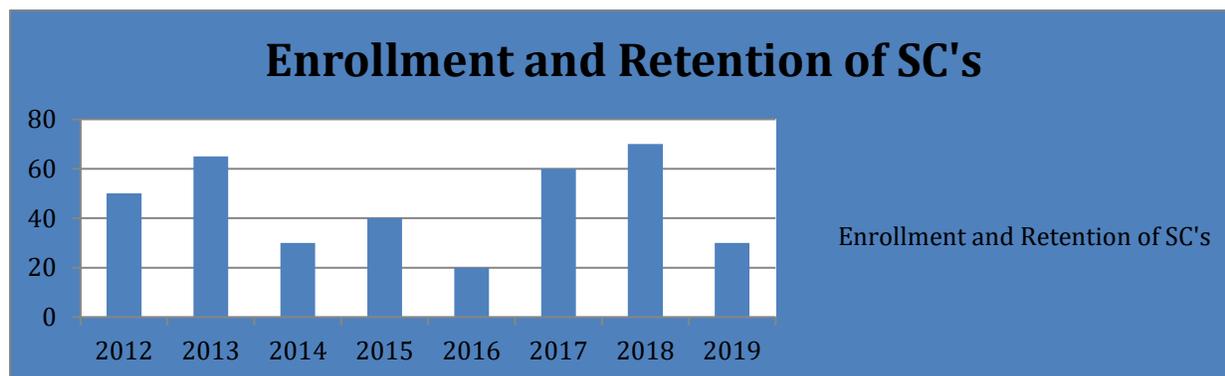
### **Tool used for study**

The researcher has used the *Information Blank* in the modified form, which was earlier used by 'Kousar Jan' in her study "*Impact of Mid-Day Meal Scheme on Enrollment of students at Upper Primary Level in Education*" administered on Headmasters/Principals and Teachers of the Elementary schools. The qualitative data was collected through the face-to-face interview with the students and Head teachers. The data was analyzed using simple mean and percentage analysis technique.

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1. Directorate of School Education Kashmir, DSEK, 2016.

**Analysis:**



**Discussion:**

The above data indicate almost identical trend regarding enrollment and retention of all social classes. Enrollment increased during years 2012, 2013, 2017 and 2018 with consistency. The scheme is doing well in these years but when we shift our attention to 2014, 2016 and 2019 it seems very uneven. The interview was conducted with head teachers to divulge the reason of these extreme cases. Therefore it was deliberated that 2014, 2016 and 2019 are the years which are affected by the peripheral causes like un-expected floods in 2014, shutdown followed by Burhan Wani's killing in 2016 and shutdown followed by abrogation of Article 35A and Article 370 in 2019.

General category has recorded highest enrollment in schools followed by OBC while Srinagar possesses a few numbers of SCs and STs. The outcome of the scheme is satisfactory but hit by extraneous factors like floods and long shutdown. In 2014 floods damaged and destroyed the school infrastructure and other buildings irrespective of public and private. Very less relief from the government was received in 2014 by the institutions as per the head teachers. Educational process got highly hampered during this period. School infrastructure and buildings took a long time to restructure the destroyed parts. The whole session got wasted consequently students rejoined the institutions in the next session. School records and all anecdotes got affected even certificates of students were destroyed.

The shutdown of 2016 is considered as the longest ever in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. The shutdown extended for about six months hampered life and other domains as well. The curfew was imposed immediately followed by the killing of Burhan Wani a Hizb commander. The authorities imposed curfew and internet was stopped. It took six months to restore normalcy. In 2019 government abrogated Article 35A and 370 which scraps the special status of Jammu and Kashmir followed shutdown and e-curfew.

**Conclusion**

The MDM scheme has moderate positive effect on enrollment and retention rate of students at elementary level in district Srinagar reflects a same trend in case of General Category, SC, ST and OBC. The outward factors like natural calamities and ongoing armed conflict hurdles the smooth functioning of schemes and hence teaching-learning.

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