



IMPACT OF SAAKSHAR BHARAT PROGRAMME ON MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES WITH REFERENCE TO HEALTH AND POLITICAL AREAS – A STUDY

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Abstract: Saakshar Bharat Programme (SBP) a centrally sponsored scheme of Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India (GOI) was launched on the International Literacy Day (ILD) 8th Sept. 2009 to impart functional literacy to 70 million non-literates in the age –group of 15+ adults in the country. SBP has been in operation in Telangana State since 2010 and millions of non-literates were made literates and they are attending Lok Shiksha Kendras/Adult Education Centres (LSK/AEC) for life-long learning to enhance their further knowledge and skills for better quality of life.

Purpose of the study: The study tried to assess two issues which are the impact to study the awareness levels of the neo-literates of SBP in Health and Political areas and to examine the extent of application level of the neo-literates in the areas of Health and Political.

Methodology: This empirical research adopted a quantitative method by distributing a schedule to 400 neo-literates located in rural based Mahabubnagar and Rangareddy districts of Telangana state. The data analyzed by using statistical techniques such as mean and percentages to assess the impact of SBP on marginalized communities with reference to health and political areas.

Main findings: The study reveals that the awareness level in health and political areas are more than 67 percent and the application level of the neo-literates are more than 75 percent in health and political areas of SBP. This is a positive trend. Therefore, it shows that SBP was more helpful to the neo-literates in their day to day life.

Application of the study: The findings of the study are useful for the government in implementing SBP on marginalized communities to strengthen the neo-literates in the areas of health and political. It would be relevant to apply solutions for the problems encountering by the neo-literates of SBP during teaching learning process.

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Novelty/originality of the study: The impact of SBP on marginalized communities relating to health and political areas has been addressed categorically concerning empowerment. Therefore, a determined plan of implementation of further action can significantly empower the neo-literates of SBP.

Key words: Saakshar; Study; Impact; Marginalised; Communities

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is the minimum educational right of every human being in the modern world. It guarantees the enjoyment of basic human rights as proclaimed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and ensures social and economic progress. Literacy has multiple roles to perform. Literacy protects people from humiliation and distress. Literacy is the most important instrument for communication. Literacy is absolutely essential from the point of view of economic development, national integration, social cohesion, cultural advancement and preservation of democracy. It is also viewed that literacy is the best means to break the vicious circle of general backwardness of a country.

Literacy is the basic step for Education and Education is an instrument of social change. In view of this, universal literacy is recognized as an important factor in contributing to social and economic development. The magnitude of illiteracy in our country was very high before independence. After independence there has been an increase in literacy rate due to the implementation of Adult Education programmes giving priority to promote Universal Literacy by the Government of India.

SBP a centrally sponsored scheme of Department of School Education and Literacy (DSEL), Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India (GOI), was launched by NLMA on the International Literacy Day (ILD), 8th September, 2009 for imparting functional literacy to 70 million non -literates in India and in united Andhra Pradesh it was 7.6 million. SBP has been in operation in Telangana state since 2010. It aims to further promote and strengthen Adult Education, specially of women, by extending educational options to those adults who having lost the opportunity of access to formal education and crossed the standard age for receiving such education, now feel a need for learning of any type, including, literacy, basic education (equivalency to formal education), vocational education (skill development), physical and emotional development, practical arts, applied science, sports, and recreation.

SAAKSHAR BHARAT PROGRAMME IN TELANGANA STATE

The average literacy rate in the Telangana State is 66.46 percent which is below the national average i.e 73 percent. However, there are variations

among the districts ranging between 83.25 percent to 55.04 percent. As per the 2011 Census, the Telangana State had a literacy rate of 66.46%, out of which 74.95% male and 57.92% female with a decadal growth rate of 8.46% as an achievement. The literacy percentage of Rangareddy district was 75.87%. Out of which, 82.11% male and 69.40% female (high literacy rate as per 2011 census) and the Mahaboobnagar district was 55.04% out of which, 65.21% male and 44.72% female. (low literacy rate as per 2011 census). The criteria for selection of these two districts was on the basis of 2011 census. SBP has been in operation in Telangana state since 2010 and millions of non-literates were made literates.

In Telangana State, there are 82,40,762 non-literates, Out of which 37,84,353 are male and 44,56,409 are female non-literates as per survey conducted by the Department of Adult Education. The Mahabubnagar district has population of 40,53,028 as per the 2011 census which accounts for 11.52 percent of the total population of the State with 15.34 percent decadal growth. The literacy rate is 55.04 percent as per 2011 census. Total no. of non-literates identified in the age group of 15 and above are 15,50,479 as male 7,13,001 and female 8,37,478 as per survey conducted by ZLSS, Mahabubnagar district.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reddy, P V S (2019) another article on the impact of Saakshar Bharat Programme for the Neo-literates of ST communities in Telangana State and found that 81.80 percent of the neo-literates used the knowledge acquired in health awareness in their day to day life activities, whereas 7.65 percent of the neo-literates did not use the knowledge and 10.55 percent of the neo-literates did not get the chance to use the health awareness. With regard to another area i.e political awareness i.e., 70.75 percent of the respondents have applied the political knowledge in their day to day life activities. 25.55 percent of the neo-literates did not get the chance to use the knowledge. The study revealed that the mean average awareness score of the neo-literates is 100 percent and application level on health awareness is 81.80 percent and 70.75 percent on political awareness. The SBP has demonstrated in creating high level of awareness on health and political awareness. The study is limited to 120 neo-literates of SBP interviewed on health and political districts.

NEED OF THE STUDY

SBP has been in operation in Telangana state since 2010, till today single study has not been attempted to understand its impact. The study aimed at to find out the awareness level and the application level of the knowledge in health and political areas. Although many studies are explored on the

literacy component, studies available on the impact are negligible. Therefore, the impact of Saakshar Bharat on marginalized communities with reference to health and political areas was undertaken.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS USED IN THE STUDY

Impact: Impact is defined as the change that occur as a result of SBP in the knowledge and application of the Neo-literates on the selected areas such as Health and Political.

Marginalised Communities: Indian constitution recognizes socially marginalized communities based on the caste they belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and the religious minorities. Marginalised communities confined to the lower or peripheral edge of the society. Such a group is denied involvement in main stream economic, political, cultural and social activities due to their living conditions, lifestyles or exclusion.

Saakshar Bharat Programme: It is a programme launched by the Government of India to impart functional literacy to the non-literates who are 15 and above age group.

Telangana: Telangana is carved out of united Andhra Pradesh with 10 districts as a separate state (now 33 districts).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the awareness levels of the neo-literates of Saakshar Bharat in Health and Political areas;
2. To examine the extent of application level of the neo-literates in the areas of Health and Political.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following are the limitations of the study:

1. The study is limited to the areas specified in the study.
2. The study is limited to the districts of Rangareddy and Mahaboobnagar.
3. The sample of the study is neo-literates only.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As a part of exploring the field data, principal methodology was adopted and analysed the collected data for the preparation of the report. Beneficiaries data was collected from two districts of Telangana (one developed district and another backward district), 2 mandals in each district

in total 4 mandals and 20 Lok Shiksha Kendras (LSK)/Adult Education Centres (AEC) from each district and in total 40 LSKs. At the rate of 10 beneficiaries in each LSK, a total of 400 respondents of marginalized communities were covered for an intensive study.

Survey method has been adopted in the present study for collection of data from the neo-literates. The survey method was used for its relevance and its aptness. Mahabubnagar and Rangareddy districts were selected for the present research study which are low literacy and high literacy districts of Telangana state. Four mandals/blocks were selected on the basis of high and low literacy rate in the mandals of two districts. 400 beneficiaries of marginalized communities in four mandals were selected for the study. Multi stage sampling was applied in selection of sample.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The collected data was analysed on the basis of objectives of the study and interpreted as follows. The percentages were calculated for interpreting the data, accordingly the conclusions are drawn and the recommendations are offered.

Socio-Economic and demographic variable viz., Sex, Age, Community, Marital status, Occupation and Annual Income of Neo-literates were discussed below.

Sex-wise information of neo-literates are given in Figure 1

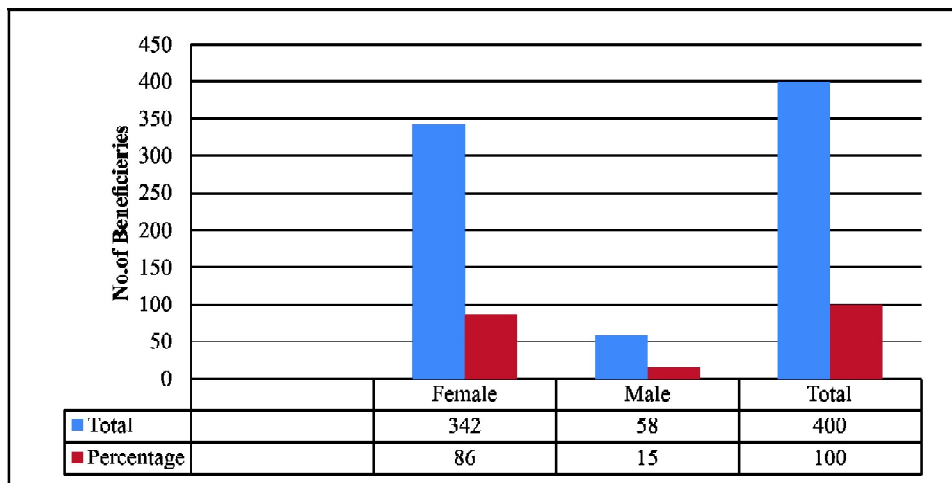


Figure 1: Sex-wise Neo-literates (beneficiaries)

Source: Field Data (2020)

Fig. 1 shows that 85.50 percent of the respondents were female while 14.50 percent of the respondents were male. NLMA has given priority to women under Saakshar Bharat Programme.

Age-wise information of neo-literates can be seen in Figure 2

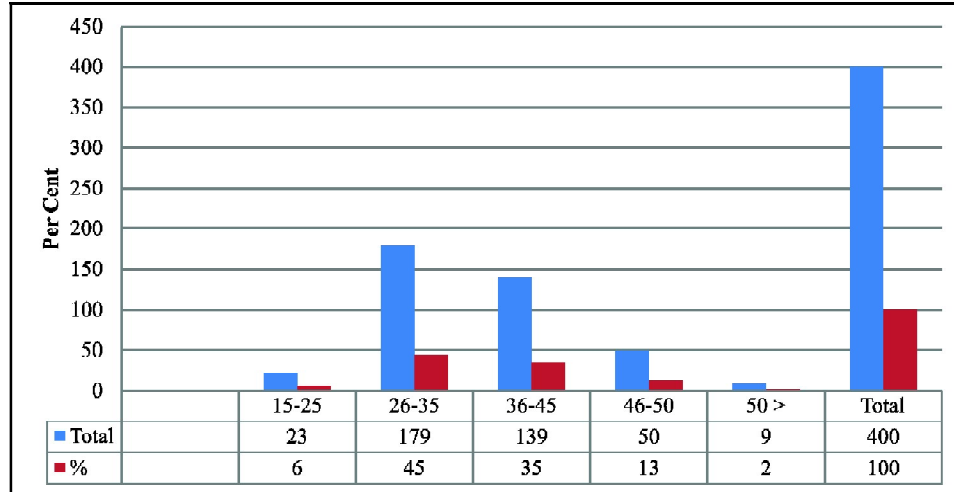


Figure 2: Age-wise neo-literates (beneficiaries)

Source: Field Data (2020)

Figure 2 shows that 44.75 percent of the respondents belonged to 26-35 age group which is considered to be productive and helpful not only to the family but also to the society. If we educated the 26-35 age group the entire family can be prosperous and children school drop-out rate may drastically decrease. 34.75 percent of the respondents belonged to 36-45 age group and 12.5 percent of the respondents in the age group 46-50 and 15-25 & above 50 years age-group were 5.75 percent and 2.25 percent were negligible respectively. The NLM has given priority to the productive age group i.e., 26-35 years of neo-literates.

Community-wise information of neo-literates are given in Figure 3.

Fig. 3 shows that 61.25 percent of the respondents belonged to SC community, 24.50 percent of the respondents belonged to ST community, 13.50 percent of the respondents belonged to minority community and 0.75 per cent of the respondents belonged to other community and it was negligible. The NLM has given priority to marginalized communities.

Marital Status of neo-literates can be seen in Figure 4.

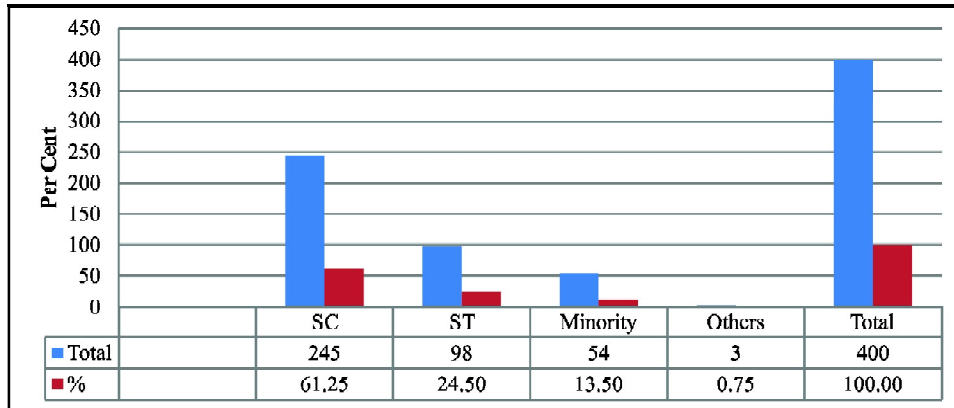


Figure 3: Community-wise neo-literates (beneficiaries)

Source: Field Data (2020)

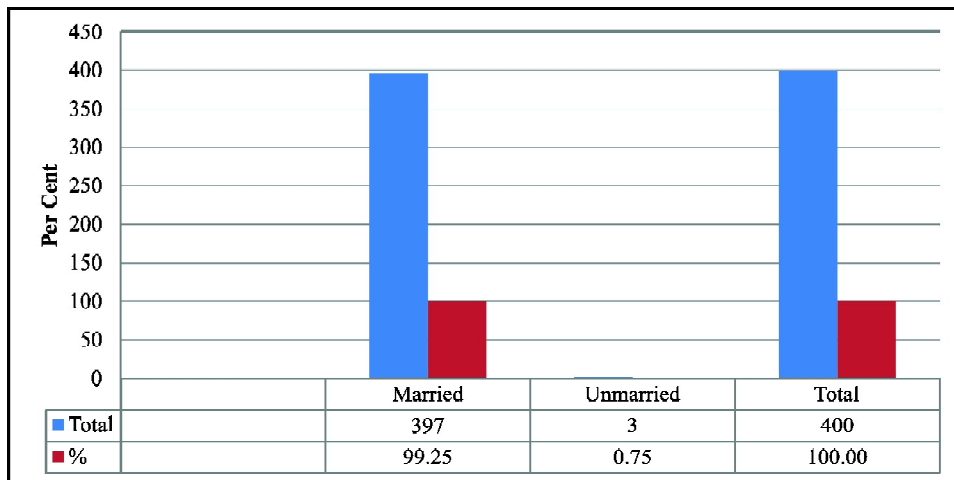


Figure 4: Marital Status of neo-literates (beneficiaries)

Source: Field Data (2020)

Figure 4 shows that 99.25 per cent of the respondents are married and hence have added responsibility of maintaining the family while 0.75 percent of the respondents were unmarried.

Occupation-wise information of neo-literates are given in Figure 5.

Fig. 5 shows that 73.75 percent respondents are agricultural labourers, 6.5 percent are agriculturists, 3.25 percent are artisans, 2.5 percent are in business and others were 14 percent. Majority percentage is agricultural labour and they need literacy for better future.

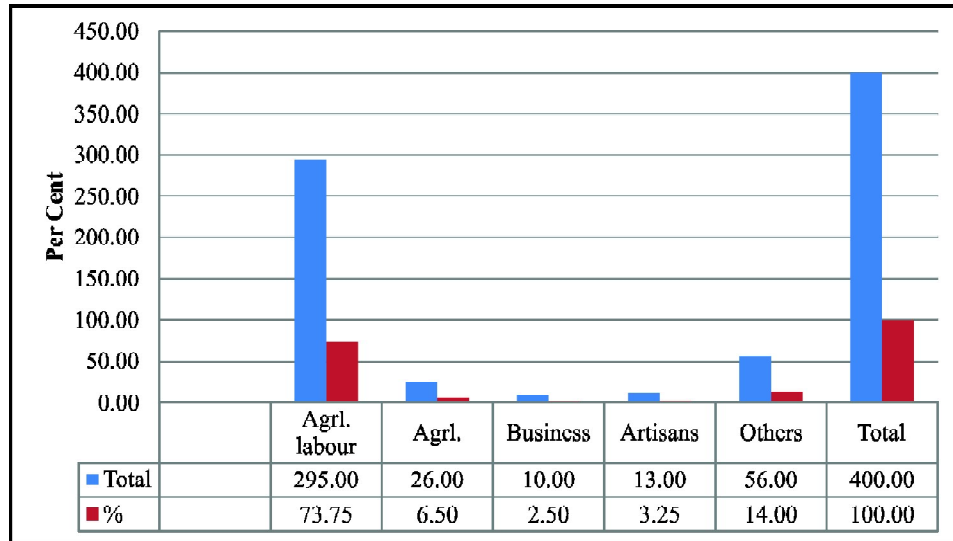


Figure 5: Occupation-wise neo-literates (beneficiaries)

Source: Field Data

Annual Income-wise information of neo-literates are given in Figure 6.

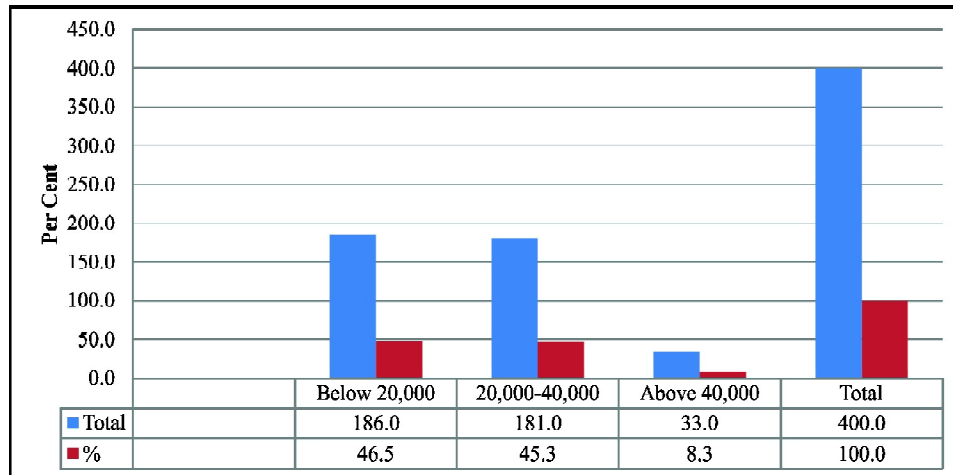


Figure 6: Annual Income (in rupees) of Neo-literates (beneficiaries)

Source: Field Data (2020)

Figure 6 shows that 46.5 percent had annual income below Rs. 20,000/-, the income of 45.25 percent had between Rs. 20,000-40,000/- and 8.25 percent had the income of Rs. 40,000/- and above. Majority of the

respondents annual income was less than 20,000/ . So they need more income to meet their family expenditure. ZSS has to arrange Skill development programmes to the beneficiaries to enhance their annual income.

Objective-1: To study the awareness levels of the neo-literates of Saakshar Bharat with reference to Health and Political areas

In order to understand the awareness level of the participants, the tool contains two options viz., yes and no. Under these two options it is tried to assess the awareness level of the participants. The area wise details are presented below.

Health Awareness: The responses of the participants are shown against each item and the results are given in table 1

Table 1
Health Awareness: No.of beneficiaries responses on each item.

Sl.no	Health awareness	No. of Responses			
		Yes	%	No	%
1	Health conscious follows if a woman literate	372	93	28	7
2	One should wash his/her hands before taking food	393	98	7	2
3	Vaccination to children good for health	395	99	5	1
4	Clean environment prevents fevers such as malaria	394	99	6	2
5	Nutritious food can be cheaper	350	88	50	13
6	Diseases can be treated with charms	61	15	339	85
7	Not necessary to take boiled water for avoiding ailments	56	14	344	86
8	Breast-feeding is good for the babies	394	99	6	2
9	Health insurance schemes protect us in difficult times	375	94	25	6
10	Better to consult the doctor immediately after conceive	392	98	8	2
11	Smoking and consumption of alcohol are injurious to health	381	95	19	5
12	Excreta, spit and mucus can be disposed anywhere	52	13	348	87
	Total mean score & percentages	3615	75.31	1185	24.69

Source: Field Data

From the above table, it could be observed that 75.31 percent of the neo-literates are aware on health related issues and 24.69 percent of the respondents are not aware about health related issues. Health related questions were discussed during teaching learning process by the preraks under SBP. 93 percent of the respondents are aware that Health consciousness follows if a woman is literate. 98 percent of the beneficiaries responded that one should wash their hands before taking food, 99 percent of the beneficiaries are aware that vaccination to children is good for health,

99 percent of the beneficiaries responded that clean environment prevents fevers such as malaria etc., 94 percent of the beneficiaries responded that Health insurance schemes protect them in difficult times. It shows that the respondents have knowledge on all health issues and the maximum score was obtained by the respondents.

Political Awareness: The responses of the participants are shown against each item and the results are given in table 2

Table 2
Political Awareness: Showing the Number of beneficiaries responses on each item

Sl.No	Political awareness	No. of Responses			
		Yes	%	No	%
1	One can cast their vote on the basis of caste, religion	61	15	339	85
2	Vote can be cast for those who offer money	52	13	348	87
3	One can vote by looking at the party	165	41	235	59
4	Vote can be given to those persons who can serve the society	355	89	45	11
5	Are you a member of village level bodies?	272	68	128	32
6	Do you know the present prime minister?	378	95	22	6
7	Do you know the present CM of our state?	393	98	7	2
8	Do you know minimum age limit for voting?	382	96	18	5
9	Do you have knowledge on political awareness?	353	88	47	12
Total mean score & percentages		2411	66.97	1189	33.03

Source: Field Data

The table No.2 shows that all the items included in the political awareness domain, it could be observed that 66.97 percent of neo-literates were aware and 33.03 percent of the respondents were not aware of political issues. 85 percent of neo-literates were aware that one cannot cast their vote on the basis of religion and caste, 87 percent of the respondents do not want to cast their vote for those who offer money, 89 percent of the respondents cannot vote by looking at the political party name, 95 percent of the participants are aware of our Prime Minister.

The neo-literates were actively participated in recent general elections and the field functionaries had created conducive environment for the same. The Chief Election Commissioner of India appreciated the efforts made by National Literacy Mission. Under SBP, the NLM has given directions to the SRCs functioning at state level as Academic training institute which has developed various teaching, learning material and publicity material for the promotion of voter awareness campaign during general elections across the country. As a result of SBP, high percentage of the people have turned

out and did franchise their vote during general elections. It is a significant achievement as far as SBP is concerned.

Objective 2: To examine the application level of the neo-literates in the areas of health and political

In order to understand the application level of the participants, the tool contains three options viz., used, not used and didn't get a chance. Under these three options it is tried to assess the application level of the participants. The area wise details are presented below.

EXTENT OF APPLICATION LEVEL

Health Awareness: The details of the responses are shown in table 3

Table 3
Application level on Health awareness- Number of beneficiaries responses on each issue/question

Sl.No	Extent of application on the following items	Used	%	Not used	%	Did not get a chance	%
1	Health conscious follows if a woman literate	364	91	26	6.5	10	2.5
2	One should wash his/her hands before taking food	359	89.75	31	7.75	10	2.5
3	Vaccination to children good for health	355	88.75	35	8.75	10	2.5
4	Clean environment prevents fevers such as malaria	350	87.5	40	10	10	2.5
5	Nutritious food can be cheaper	306	76.5	81	20.25	13	3.25
6	Diseases can be treated with charms	249	62.25	140	35	11	2.75
7	Not necessary to take boiled water for avoiding ailments	273	68.25	104	26	23	5.75
8	Breast-feeding is good for the babies	355	88.75	33	8.25	12	3
9	Health insurance schemes protect us in difficult times	314	78.5	49	12.25	37	9.25
10	Better to consult the doctor immediately after conceive	355	88.75	34	8.5	11	2.75
11	Smoking and consumption of alcohol are injurious to health	277	69.25	91	22.75	32	8
12	Excreta, spit and mucus can be disposed anywhere	239	59.75	120	30	41	10.25
	Total mean score & percentages	3796	79.08	784	16.33	220	4.58

Source: Field data (2020)

Table 3 shows that 79.08 percent of the respondents have used the knowledge of health aspects. 16.33 percent of the respondents did not use the knowledge and 4.58 percent of the respondents did not get the chance

to use the health knowledge. This is a positive trend. Therefore, it shows that SBP was more helpful to the neo-literates in their day to day life.

Political Awareness: The details of the responses are shown in table 4.

Table 4
Application level on Political awareness-Number of beneficiaries responses on each issue/question

Sl.No	Extent of application on the following items	Used	%	Not used	%	Did not get a chance	%
1	One can cast their vote on the basis of caste, religion	252	63	129	32.25	19	4.75
2	Vote can be cast for those who offer money	189	47.25	177	44.25	34	8.5
3	One can vote by looking at the party	258	64.5	127	31.75	15	3.75
4	Vote can be given to those persons who can serve the society	354	88.5	43	10.75	3	0.75
5	Are you a member of village level groups or governing body?	259	64.75	133	33.25	8	2
6	Do you know the present prime minister?	314	78.5	58	14.5	28	7
7	Do you know the present CM of our state?	338	84.5	35	8.75	27	6.75
8	Do you know minimum age limit for voting?	343	85.75	47	11.75	10	2.5
9	Do you have complete awareness on politics?	310	77.5	54	13.5	36	9
	Total mean score & percentages	2617	72.69	803	22.31	180	5

Source: Field data (2020)

Table 4 shows that 72.69 percent of the respondents have used the knowledge of political awareness. 22.31 percent of the respondents did not use the knowledge and 5.0 percent of the respondents did not get the chance to use the political awareness. It is very clear that nearly three fourth of the beneficiaries who have better political awareness could apply the same in their life situation which is appreciable. Mere knowledge is not enough unless a person applies and functionally improved for better living. Therefore, the SBP was more helpful to the neo-literates in their day to day life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following results and discussion are presented under two dimensions viz, Awareness and extent of application level in the areas of health and political.

- The age group of sample beneficiaries reveals that 44.75 percent of the respondents belonged to 26-35 age group which is considered to be productive and helpful not only to the family but also to the

society. If we educated the 26-35 age group the entire family can be prosperous and children school dropout rate may drastically decrease. 34.75 percent of the respondents belonged to 36-45 age group. The NLM has given priority to the productive age group i.e 26-35 years neo-literates/beneficiaries.

- SBP was formulated focusing more on women and hence, 85.50 percent of the sample beneficiaries were female is not a surprise. True to the proverb that "If a woman is educated, then the family is educated", the female beneficiaries with their added knowledge could have proved to be an asset to the family.
- The NLM has given priority to marginalized communities. It is true that 61.25 percent of the respondents belonged to SC community, 24.50 percent of the respondents belonged to ST community, 13.50 percent of the respondents belonged to minority community and 0.75 percent of the respondents belonged to other community and it was negligible.
- 99.25 percent of the sample beneficiaries reported to have been married. They, joining the literacy programme and gaining knowledge will be of great help to their own family participants and also to the community they belong and society in which they live.
- 46.5 percent had annual income below Rs.20,000/-, the income of 45.25 percent had between Rs.20,000-40,000/- and 8.25 percent had the income of Rs.40,000/- and above. Majority of the respondents annual income was less than 20,000/.
- 75.31 percent of the neo-literates are aware on health related issues and 24.69 percent of the respondents are not aware about health related issues. Health related questions were discussed during teaching learning process by the preraks under SBP. It shows that the respondents have knowledge on all health issues and the maximum score was obtained by the respondents.
- 88 percent of the neo-literates have knowledge about the issues related to political consciousness. 96 percent of the respondents are aware of minimum age limit for voting. The neo-literates actively participated in recent general elections and created conducive environment for the same. The Chief Election Commissioner of India appreciated the efforts made by National Literacy Mission. Under SBP, the NLM has given directions to the SRCs functioning at state level as Academic training institute which has developed various teaching, learning material and publicity

material for the promotion of voter awareness campaign during general elections across the country. As a result of SBP, high percentage of the people have turned and franchise their vote during general elections. It is significant achievement as far as SBP is concerned.

- 79.08 percent of the respondents have used the knowledge of health aspects. 16.33 percent of the respondents did not use the knowledge and 4.58 percent of the respondents did not get the chance to use the health knowledge. This is a positive trend. Therefore, it shows that SBP was more helpful to the neo-literates in their day to day life.
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The impact: The impact/changes occurred as a result of Saakshar Bharat Programme are given hereunder

- Self-confidence level of the neo-literates is increased
- Health awareness of the neo-literates is improved
- Communication skills among the beneficiaries is increased
- Participation in social activities and helping the others is improved
- Saving habit of the neo-literates is increased
- Positive thinking is developed among the neo-literates
- Community has given respect to the neo-literates
- Awareness levels on Nutritious food among neo-literates is increased
- Planning their own family budget of neo-literates is improved
- Quality of life among neo-literates is enhanced
- The social status of the neo-literates of SBP is enhanced
- Participating in developmental schemes and utilized the schemes properly and increasing their financial positions.
- Learning environment for neo-literates is conducive and they are sending their children to schools.

- Thinking level on income generating activities is increased
- Awareness on travelling is improved

The study reveals that the mean Awareness /Knowledge score of the neo-literates is 75.31 percent in Health and 66.93 percent in Political areas. The application level mean score is 79.02 in health and 72.69 percent in political areas. It shows that the extent of application level of neo-literates is more than the knowledge acquired during teaching learning process. After becoming a literate they had utilized the services of the Continuing Education Centre /Adult Education Centre /Lok Shiksha Kendra and improved their knowledge and skills. These CECs/AECs/LSKs were located in every village/Gram Panchayat level as centre of knowledge hub for life long learning.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The following policy implications are made on the impact of the Saakshar Bharat Programme:

- Programmes which would enhance the present skills of neo-literates and acquisition of new skills are to be designed and implemented in the AECs.
- Campaigns need to be undertaken on child marriages, superstitions and other issues at the Adult Education Centre level to sensitize the not only neo-literates but also other general people in the village.
- In today's fast changing complex world, it would not be enough to acquire the traditional skills of reading, writing and numeracy among rural adults. Developments in technology are taking place so rapidly that the perceptions about what it means to be a literate person are also changing. Computer Based Functional Literacy Programme should be arranged for the non-literates at every Gram Panchayat level to cover all non-literates using the technology for rapid literacy.
- The teaching learning material (primers) should be need based and community dialect with attractive illustrations and big font. Various supplementary reading material on continuing education programme should be provided to neo-literates to upgrade their learning skills further. Sufficient journal, magazines, books, sports material, play material should be available at every LSK/AEC.
- Lok Shiksha Kendras / Adult Education Centres need to be made more functional in order to cater to the needs of the neo-literates.

- Every attempt is to be made to ensure that the community would visit the AEC and learn the current issues and if relevant, they can apply the same in their life activities.
- Mobile library would change the outlook of the neo-literates about the life and the reading of books on issues of relevance would change their approach towards life too.
- Vocational Skill Development Programmes should be provided for neo-literates on various trades/skills with the support of various organisations and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs) for better livelihood.
- Concurrent Evaluation of literacy Programme by the Department of Adult & Continuation Education of the respective Universities /DIETS/ SLMAs should be conducted regularly and implementation agencies have to adopt and execute the same in the field to achieve tangible results.

CONCLUSION

SBP launched by the Government of India to impart functional literacy to the non-literates who are 15 and above age group and to cover 70 million in India. It provides literacy, functionality and social awareness among the target people. Literacy and awareness is two edged weapon for a person which can be used to improve the life situation. The literacy programmes in India always focused on these two to enable the non-literates to gain knowledge on various issues and apply the same in their life situation for functional improvement. Gaining literacy skills enable the person to read and write which will go a long way to know more information from the written texts. If parents are educated, they are sending their children to school regularly and the dropout rate is very low. SBP, a well planned adult education programme has in many ways helped the non-literates to acquire both literacy skills and awareness skills. In a vast country like India which is developing fast in almost all areas people should be educated so that they become part and parcel of development.

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