

ATTITUDES OF INDIAN STUDENTS TO THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS OF INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

The First and Second Five-Year Plans of the Government of India are the first two in the series undertaken by the National Planning Commission to initiate a process of development which will raise living standards and open out to the people new opportunities for a richer and more varied life. These plans are crucial for the nation as besides providing hope for the future, they also at present do involve a tremendous amount of national wealth, foreign exchange and human efforts. However it is rather surprising that since the initiation of the planning system in 1950, no attempt has ever been made to assess people's attitudes to this aspect of their national life.

A general discussion of these plans and of their sociological and psychological implications revealed that

- (a) people differed widely in their evaluation of the outcome of the plans,
- (b) the student population of the universities and colleges of India were slow to become plan-conscious despite the efforts of University Planning Forums and
- (c) students held different opinions regarding different aspects of the plans (e.g. social, economic, practical and cultural etc.)

But any definite conclusion, from a psychologist's point of view, would have been a gross exaggeration unless a research tool was available by the use of which the attitude could be objectively assessed and the effects of a number of socio-psychological variables ascertained. In fact there are some reports relating social factors to attitudes to the plans, but these reports are scattered in the form of comments in daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, speeches of eminent persons in India and abroad and there is no review, as far as is known to the present author, on this subject.

With these considerations in mind, a small survey was undertaken. This report deals chiefly with

- (a) Development of a scale to measure attitudes toward the plans
- (b) Some hypotheses concerning associations between attitudes towards the plans (their various aspects) and some social variables (e.g. sex, educational level, faculty and social class or socio-economic status).

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCALE

The Likert¹ (1932) method was followed. For this, 200 statements pertaining to various aspects of the First and Second Five-Year Plans were collected from newspapers, periodicals and relevant literature on the subject. The statements were given to two experts for their comments and

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¹Likert, R. (1932), A Technique for the Measurement of Attitude, *Arch. Psychol.* 140.

suggestions. On the basis of their evaluation, a list of 66 statements was provisionally selected and was then administered to a sample of 30 students of Bihar University. Using the Arbitrary Weighting method score values were determined for each statement. The item-consistency was secured by comparing the average scores of the highest and the lowest 33 per cent scoring subjects. The items then were analysed for their discriminatory power. Only 40 items which differentiated (the criterion being a difference of 1.5 scale point) the highest and the lowest 33 per cent scoring subjects were incorporated into the final scale (see appendix). The split-half reliability, after the Spearman-Brown Correction, was .84 which indicated that it was a satisfactory scale for the proposed investigation.

METHOD

(a) Subjects

The attitude scale consisting of 40 items was administered to a comparatively homogeneous sample of 125 students of L.S. College, Bihar University. Their ages ranged from 19 to 26 years with a mean of 22.4.

(b) Classification of items

The scale items were divided into 4 categories independently by 3 judges. Table 1 shows the items that describe attitudes toward social, economic, cultural and practical aspects of the plans.

TABLE 1

Items (numbers correspond to statements in the appendix) referring to different aspects of the plans.

Social	2, 10, 14, 22, 29, 37, 38, 39, 40
Economic	6, 7, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 27, 31, 36
Cultural	4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 13, 21, 25, 28, 32, 35
Practical	1, 3, 9, 15, 18, 26, 30, 33, 34

(c) Scoring

Each positive item was scored 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for the degree from strong disagree-

ment to strong agreement (the scoring was reversed for negative items). In this way the higher the total score, the more favourable the attitude: an overall score of 200, 160, 120, 80 and 40 was indicative of a strongly favourable, favourable, neutral, unfavourable and strongly unfavourable attitude to the plans respectively.

RESULTS

The results set out in Tables 2-4 are based on the analyses of 100 returned questionnaires. There were 65 males and 35 females; 54 postgraduates and 46 undergraduates. Seventy-three evaluated themselves as belonging to social class 1, 17 social class 2 and only 10 social class 3. The faculty of study was evenly distributed: 50 arts and 50 science students. In all comparisons, the statistical significance was tested by the Chi square or whenever appropriate the Fisher's Exact Method.

(a) Attitude toward the Plans

Table 2 shows that 65 were found to hold favourable, 28 unfavourable and 7 neutral attitudes to the plans. Postgraduates evaluated them more favourably than undergraduates ($P < .01$), students from social class 1 were more favourable in comparison to students from social classes 2 and 3 ($P < .01$). No association was found between overall attitudes to the plans and sex and faculty of study.

TABLE 2
ATTITUDES TO THE PLANS

Variables		Favourable	Unfavourable
Sex	M	48	17
	F	17	11
Faculty	A	32	15
	S	33	13
Educational level	UG	19	20
	PG	46	8
Social class	I	51	15
	II	11	6
	III	3	7

(b) Social aspects

Eighty students were found to hold favourable, 18 unfavourable and 2 neutral attitudes toward the social aspects of the plans. Breakdown on faculty (see Table 3) shows that arts students, as compared to science, viewed the social aspects of the plans more favourably ($P < .05$). Students from social class 2 were more favourable than those from social class 3 ($P < .045$).

TABLE 3

ATTITUDES TO SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE PLANS

<u>Variables</u>		<u>Favourable</u>	<u>Unfavourable</u>
Sex	M	52	13
	F	28	5
Faculty	A	45	5
	S	35	13
Educational level	UG	38	7
	PG	42	11
	Social class		
	I	60	11
	II	15	2
	III	5	5

(c) Cultural aspects

Of 100 students, 51 held favourable and 49 unfavourable attitudes to the cultural aspects of the plans. Social factors as faculty of study, sex and educational level except social class influenced attitudes to this aspect very clearly. Arts students were found to be more favourable than science students ($P < .05$), females more favourable than males ($P < .01$) and postgraduates more favourable than undergraduates ($P < .05$). No association was found between social class and attitudes to the cultural aspects of the plans (see Table 4).

TABLE 4

ATTITUDES TOWARDS CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE PLANS

<u>Variable</u>		<u>Favourable</u>	<u>Unfavourables</u>
Sex	M	27	38
	F	24	11
Faculty	A	31	19
	S	20	30
Educational level	UG	18	28
	PG	33	21
	Social class		
	I	33	40
	II	13	4
	III	5	5

(d) Economic and Practical aspects

No significant association was found between attitudes to these aspects of the plans and different social factors. Science students were found to be more favourable to the practical and economic aspects of the plans as compared with arts students but the difference was statistically insignificant. However, 49 out of 64 males as compared to 17 out of 34 females ($P < .01$) were favourable to the economic aspects of the plans.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Seven students were non-committal, males were more favourable than females and postgraduates more favourable than undergraduates. It is not surprising. The investigation, on the whole, confirms as predicted that the student population is relatively slow in becoming plan conscious and that there is considerable difference in attitudes associated with differences in educational level, social class and sex. The social norm—both roles and values—differs so much with age, sex, socioeconomic status and education that attitudes to the plans seem to reflect them. More neutral and unfavourable attitudes in females, their favourable attitude to cultural aspects and unfavourable attitude to economic aspects presumably suggest their subordinate status and lack of responsibility

in the Indian society. Even students in general regardless of sex, family background and education, one gains the impression, more often find it convenient to throw the entire responsibility on to persons who actively participate in the policy-making without any awareness of the fact that their decisions regarding matters of national concern also do involve them.

But there are two reservations in respect of the data on which the following conclusions are based. First, there is no reason to justify that the attitudes of the students of one particular college of Bihar University do necessarily reflect the attitudes of Indian students in general. Secondly it was not possible in this report to check the results against contamination due to overlap. Further studies on a much wider scale

will, therefore, be required before the results can be confidently accepted.

However, the following interesting trends emerge from this study:

1. Students on the whole hold favourable attitudes to the plans.
2. Male students in general are more favourable in their attitude than female students.
3. Favourableness of attitude to the plans correlates highly with educational level and social class—the higher the social class and educational level, the more favourable the attitudes.
4. Attitudes to the plans in general and to their various aspects differ widely among students depending upon their sex, educational level and social class.

APPENDIX

The Attitude Scale

Below are the forty statements pertaining to the First and Second Five-Year Plans of India. Here you are required to give your own opinion to each statement in "your opinion" column. Be frank in your judgment. Do not consult anybody while you give your opinion.

Note: You have to use the following symbols in your judgment:

++ for strongly agree; for — strongly disagree;

+ if you agree on the whole; — if you disagree on the whole; and O if you are undecided about it.

*Statements**"Your Opinion"*

1. The plans should be continued.
2. The plans encourage social improvement.
3. The plans are entirely unnecessary.
4. The plans have earned a good reputation for India.
5. The plans are both the assessment of past achievements and also of the future ones.
6. The plans do not rebuild rural India.
7. The plans give opportunity of services in the common cause of eliminating poverty.
8. Because of the plans, a great and bright future lies ahead of India.
9. The plans have no positive value.
10. The plans give help in meeting our social problems.
11. The planning system provides an abiding faith in the future of the nation.
12. The plans have not rightly directed our country toward a socialistic pattern of society.
13. The plans are the embodiment of national cooperation and strength of India.
14. The plans are doing more harm than good.
15. The majority of our countrymen have faith in the plans.
16. The country cannot prosper, if the plans are dropped.
17. The plans direct the nation's efforts towards the nation's goals.
18. The people are very hopeful about the plans.
19. Expenditure incurred on the plans has yielded maximum return.
20. The plans are responsible for present economic miseries.
21. The plans are leading the country to the ideal of a welfare state.
22. The plans have brought about an awakening in the mass.
23. The plans are well thought out steps to promote rapid and balanced economic development.
24. The plans have made the rich richer; the poor poorer.
25. The plans have been able to create a new atmosphere in the country and a new outlook in the minds of the people.
26. The people are not ready to meet the challenge of the plans.
27. The plans provide progressive improvement in the level of national wealth.
28. For the success of the plans, it is our duty to contribute our maximum help.
29. The plans have given disproportionate weight to rural rather than to the urban development.

30. India would have been better off, without these plans.
31. The plans are the only means by which the country can materially prosper.
32. The plans have provided peace and security to Indians.
33. The planning forums in colleges have made the students plan conscious.
34. The plans benefit no one.
35. The plans constitute the best of all possible programmes which could be undertaken by the present government.
36. The plans are bound to succeed as they are utilising all the available resources of the country.
37. The plans are too ambitious in scope to benefit the people.
38. The plans have provided few facilities for the common people.
39. The plans are not adequate for social welfare.
40. The plans have secured enough public participation.