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FACTORS INFLUENCING HSLC OUTCOMES: A STUDY OF DIVISION-WISE PERFORMANCE IN KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT OF ASSAM

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the factors influencing High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) outcomes in Karbi Anglong over a five-year period, focusing on division-wise performance. Utilizing data on first, second, and third division pass rates, as well as failure rates, this research aims to identify key determinants that contribute to varying levels of academic achievement. Through a detailed analysis of the data, trends in student performance are explored, highlighting the role of socioeconomic status, school resources, and educational interventions. The study also delves into disparities across different schools and student demographics, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the region's educational landscape. This research also investigates the impact of geographic factors, such as urban versus rural school locations, on student outcomes. It also considers the potential influence of parental education levels and community support systems on students' academic success. By identifying patterns and correlations within the data, the study aims to propose targeted strategies for improving HSLC results and enhancing overall educational quality in Karbi Anglong.

INTRODUCTION
The HSLC examination is very important in Assam as it is a major milestone in the academic carrer of a student. Administered by the Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA), the HSLC is a pass to higher learning and employment. The results of this examination are crucial in determining the students' chances of joining higher secondary schools and their future careers. It is considered as a significant milestone, which shapes not only personal destinies but also the future of education in the state (Deka, 2019). The HSLC examination is significant in Assam because of the socio-economic structure of the state where education is seen to better living and social status. To many families, especially those in rural and tribal areas, a good result in HSLC means scholarships, better schools, and government jobs (Baruah, 2020). The focus on this exam also aligns with the state's initiatives to improve the quality of education and decrease the dropout rates, especially in the less privileged areas (Sharma, 2021).

Hence, the HSLC examination is an indicator of academic achievement and a significant factor in determining prospects and enhancing the quality of education in Assam. In Karbi Anglong, an administrative district of Assam with a predominantly tribal population, the result of the HSLC examination has a very important role to play in the life of each student as well as in society. Since education remains a key determinant of social mobility, identifying the predictors of HSLC outcomes in this region is important in designing interventions to enhance learning outcomes.

OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY
The primary objective of this study is to analyze the factors influencing High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) outcomes in Karbi Anglong over five years, with a specific focus on division-wise performance. The study seeks to:

1. Examine trends in student performance.
2. Identify the key determinants that contribute to variations in academic achievement.
3. Evaluate the role of educational interventions and policies in improving HSLC outcomes.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY
Despite various initiatives aimed at enhancing educational quality, disparities in academic performance persist, particularly when analyzed through the lens of division-wise outcomes. The variation in first, second, and third division pass rates, as well as failure rates, points to the existence of underlying determinants that affect student achievement. These determinants range from socioeconomic conditions and school resources to broader geographic and cultural factors, which together create a complex

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web of influences that shape educational outcomes. The study's outcomes could help inform educational policies aimed at reducing inequalities and ensuring that all students in Karbi Anglong have equal access to quality education and the opportunity to succeed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Binud Mochahari, Prof. T. Sangyu Yaden, and Mr. Mindar Rongphar(2021) highlight the critical role of education in the socio-economic development of rural and tribal communities in the hill regions of Assam. The findings reveal that the number of educational institutions in the district is alarmingly low, which poses a significant barrier to development. The authors emphasize the need for strategic planning and urgent intervention to improve access to quality education. They argue that education is essential for uplifting the economic and social conditions of hill tribes in the district.

The research work titled "Problem of Education in Karbi Anglong District" by Miss Sobita Tokbipi (2017) reveals some of the major issues in the education sector of Karbi Anglong, Assam. Some of the challenges include communication facilities, inadequate power supply and lack of quality education facilities. Lack of education is caused by poverty and income disparity; corruption in the administration of education compounds the problem by increasing dropout rates. Cultural practices also negatively affect education, and difficult terrains hinder school access, especially in rural areas. The study therefore calls for government interventionism and community sensitization in order to address these challenges.

The study "Impact of Higher Education in Karbi Community of Karbi Anglong District of Assam" by Dr. (Mrs.) Parbin R. Akhtar and Trailokya Deka (2016) explore the transformative role of higher education in fostering community development and economic growth. It emphasizes that higher education serves as a crucial tool for creating a modern, value-based society and for developing dynamic, self-reliant citizens. The authors argue that educated individuals contribute significantly to the economy by enhancing productivity and wages, thus benefiting society as a whole.

The study by Bhagawati and Panyang (2015) revealed that family demographic factors have a negative impact on the academic performance of Karbi students in H.S.L.C. examination. Some disparities were observed between the urban and rural students and therefore the need to enhance the educational policies and facilities for the Karbi students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research work is based on the analysis of HSLC examination results of the Karbi Anglong district from the year 2019 to 2023, which is a district inhabited by a multiracial population comprising of the Karbi, Bodo, Dimasa, Tiwa and many other tribes. The examination of these outcomes offers an understanding of the tendencies in students' performance, pass rates, and effects of the external conditions, including the COVID-19 pandemic, on learning in the area. The analysis of the data for the five-year period shows that there are variations in the number of students who appeared for the exams and pass percentages. While the 2021 results showed a remarkable increase in the pass rate, likely due to pandemic-related adjustments, a sharp decline in 2022 reflects a return to more standardized evaluation practices.

Table 1: HSLC examination data of Karbi Anglong district from 2019 to 2023

Session	Total appeared	First division	Second division	Third division	Total passed	Pass Percentage
2019	**13617**	**927**	**2170**	**3588**	**6685**	**49.09**
2020	**14013**	**983**	**2455**	**4005**	**7443**	**53.11**
2021	**12116**	**1206**	**3326**	**6429**	**10961**	**90.47**
2022	**10201**	**1026**	**2247**	**1819**	**5092**	**49.92**
2023	**10126**	**1813**	**4084**	**1745**	**7642**	**75.47**

Source: Result Gazette published by SEBA, Assam

1. *Overall Trend in Students Appearing for Exams*
   The number of students appearing for the exams decreases over time, from 13,617 in 2019 to 10,126 in 2023. The largest drop occurred between 2020 (14,013 students) and 2021 (12,116 students), possibly because of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting education. Also, Separation of Karbi Anglong as a new district could be another contributing factor for this largest drop.

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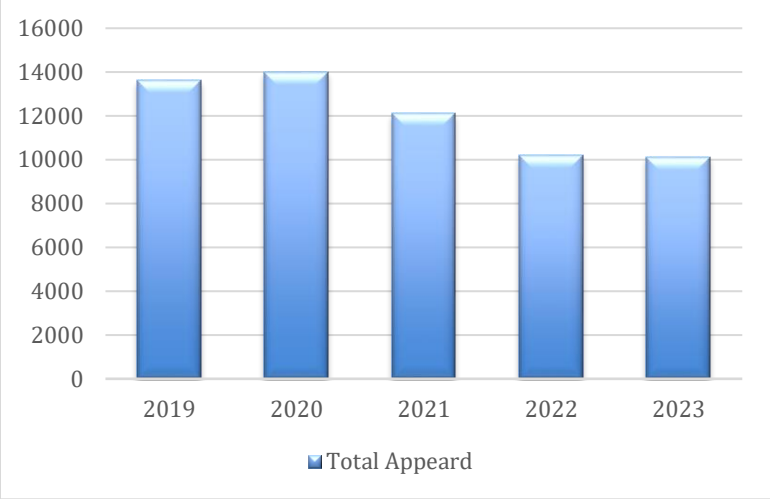


Figure 1: Number of students appearing for the HSLC exam from 2019 to 2023

2. Pass Percentage Variations

2019: The pass percentage was 49.09% which indicates that nearly half of the students passed in the examination.

2020: A slight increase to 53.11% which may be attributed to better understanding of education systems and exams.

2021: A significant rise to 90.47% which might be due to special measures during the pandemic like easier evaluations, online assessments or other changes in the examination procedures.

2022: There was a drop back to 49.92% which was attributed to the fact that students had to go back to their normal exam performance after the changes that were made due to the pandemic.

2023: The pass percentage rebounds to 75.47%, which could indicate gradual improvement or recovery in students' preparation and school systems after the challenges faced during and post-pandemic.

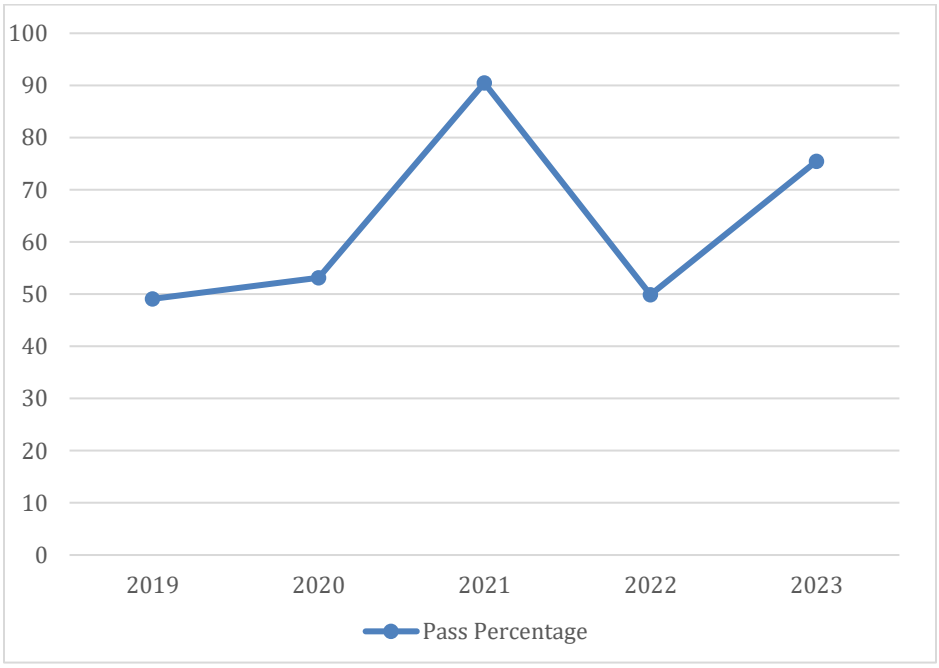


Figure 2: Pass Percentage Variations over the years.

3. Performance by Division

The number of students achieving first division has been steadily increasing, from 927 in 2019 to 1,813 in 2023. This suggests a positive trend in top-performing students over the years. The number of students achieving second division has fluctuated but remained relatively consistent, peaking at 3,326 in 2021 and

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falling to 4,084 in 2023. The third division numbers also fluctuate, with a sharp drop in 2022 (1,819) compared to 3,588 in 2019 and 6,429 in 2021.

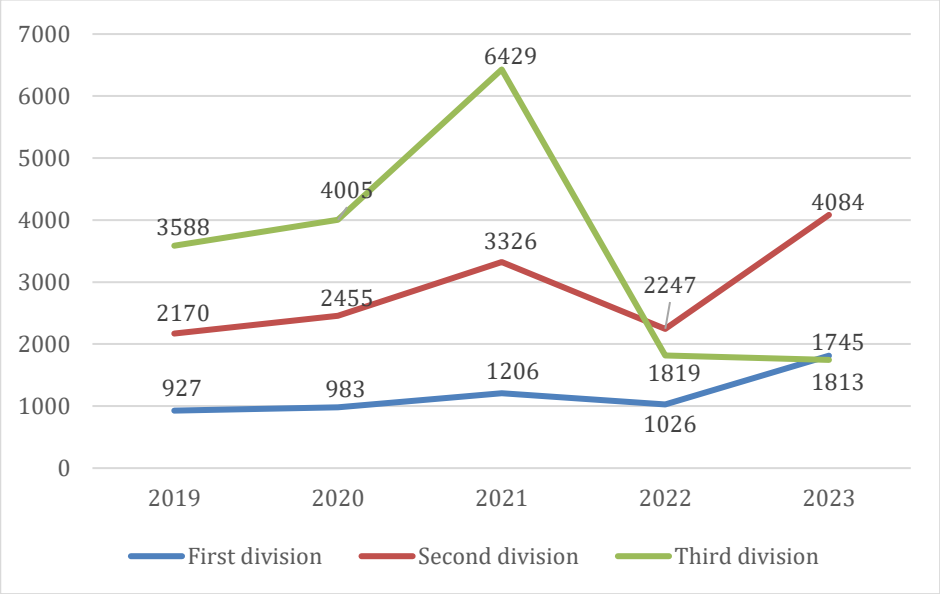


Figure 3: Comparison of students achieving First, Second and Third division

4. *Impact of the Pandemic*
The sharp rise in the pass percentage in 2021 (90.47%) followed by a drop to 49.92% in 2022 suggests that the pandemic had a strong impact on evaluation methods. Many regions adopted lenient marking schemes or alternative assessments during the pandemic, which may explain the 2021 spike. The return to more rigorous exams in 2022 seems to have brought the pass percentage back to pre-pandemic levels. The gradual recovery in 2023 (75.47% pass percentage) shows that the education system and students are likely adapting and improving after the disruptions of the previous years.

Factors Influencing HSLC Outcomes

Students in Karbi Anglong district face a range of challenges when appearing for the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) exams, some of which include:

1. *Poor Educational Infrastructure*
Most of the schools in Karbi Anglong district of Assam are in a very poor condition in terms of infrastructure like proper classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and sanitation facilities. This makes it difficult for students to study in a conducive learning environment which are affecting their performance.

2. *Transportation and Accessibility Issues*
The district has a number of hills and this hinders the students to access schools and examination centers. This is compounded by poor road networks and unavailability of reliable means of transport, which makes many students to walk long distances which is both physically and psychologically tiring.

3. *Economic Constraints*
Many families in Karbi Anglong district of Assam belong to economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Financial hardships often mean that students must contribute to household incomes through farming or labor, leaving them with less time to focus on their studies and exam preparation.

4. *Language Barrier*
While Assamese and English are the mediums of instruction and examination, many students in Karbi Anglong speak local dialects or languages. This language barrier can create difficulties in understanding textbooks and exam questions, particularly for students from indigenous communities.

5. Shortage *of Qualified Teachers*
The district has a shortage of qualified and trained teachers, especially in areas of specialization such as science and mathematics. This shortage leads to students being provided with poor guidance and support, hence their poor performance in the HSLC exams.

6. *Lack of Access to Supplementary Learning Resources*
Students in rural areas of Karbi Anglong district often do not have access to tutoring centers, coaching, or supplementary learning materials, unlike their urban counterparts. The absence of these resources puts them at a

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disadvantage, especially for competitive exams like the HSLC.

7. *Psychological Stress*
The pressures of performing well in the HSLC exam, combined with the socio-economic challenges, cause significant stress among students. In rural and isolated areas, there is often a lack of mental health support, which can further hinder students' academic performance.

8. *Social and Cultural Responsibilities*
Students especially from indigenous backgrounds have other chores such as preserving cultural practices or assisting with family chores, which limits the time they can devote to studying. These challenges point to the fact that there is need to address specific needs like infrastructure, economic support and education to give students in Karbi Anglong a fair chance to excel in their HSLC exams.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges Faced by Students
Students in Karbi Anglong face several obstacles that impact their ability to perform well in the HSLC exams. To address these issues and improve academic outcomes, a combination of infrastructural, educational, and socio-economic strategies is needed. Below are key strategies that can help overcome the challenges:

1. *Improving Educational Infrastructure*
The government, in partnership with local communities, should invest in building and upgrading schools. This includes the construction of well-equipped classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. Introducing digital or smart classrooms can help bridge the resource gap in rural schools, providing students with access to modern teaching tools and resources.

2. *Enhancing Transportation Facilities*
Enhanced road infrastructure is important in order to guarantee that students can easily access schools and examination centers. The government should ensure that construction and maintenance of roads are done especially in the rural and hilly regions. The district administration could arrange school bus services for the students who are in the villages far from school so that they can be relieved from the physical stress of long-distance travel and also be punctual.

3. *Providing Economic Support to Families*
Offering scholarships and financial incentives to economically disadvantaged students can reduce the pressure of contributing to household income and allow them to focus more on their studies. Strengthening existing midday meal programs ensures students receive nutritious meals, which can improve their concentration and reduce malnutrition-related absenteeism.

4. *Addressing Language Barriers*
Schools should introduce bilingual learning materials, using both the local dialects and the official exam languages (Assamese and English). This will help students transition more easily into the exam language. Training teachers to be proficient in both the local languages and the exam medium can make learning more accessible for students from indigenous communities.

5. *Hiring and Training More Teachers*
Incentives such as higher salaries, housing, and career development opportunities should be offered to attract qualified teachers to rural and remote areas like Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Providing regular training for teachers in innovative pedagogical methods, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects, can enhance the quality of instruction.

6. *Strengthening Digital Learning Infrastructure*
The government could negotiate with the telecom providers to provide free or discounted internet connection for students especially after the COVID-19 pandemic to enable them to learn online. Therefore, the programs that seek to offer laptops or tablets to economically disadvantaged students will enable them to have the devices to access online resources and classes.

7. *Providing Psychological Support*
Schools should offer mental health support services to help students cope with exam stress and other psychological pressures. This could be done through school counselors or mobile mental health units that visit rural schools. By conducting workshops on stress management, time management, and exam preparation strategies can help students approach their exams with confidence.

8. *Balancing Cultural Responsibilities with Education*
Where students are engaged in cultural or agricultural activities, schools could provide flexible time or evening classes so that the students do not miss their classes. Integrating culture and tradition in the curriculum can help the students relate to what they are learning, and this may help them to have pride in their work hence they may not drop out of school easily.

By implementing these strategies, the challenges faced by students in Karbi Anglong can be mitigated, improving not only HSLC exam performance but also the overall quality of education in the district.

CONCLUSIONS

Enhancing the performance of HSLC exam candidates is a complex process that involves the consideration of several factors that affect the candidates. First, the quality of teaching has to be improved through the professional development of teachers, which will guarantee that they use effective and student-oriented approaches that foster understanding and knowledge retention. As important as this is the need to upgrade school facilities especially in the rural areas where schools lack basic amenities like libraries and laboratories which are crucial

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in enhancing students' learning. Socio-economic factors are also other factors that affect the performance of students in their studies. Some students experience financial challenges that make them lack books or materials to study from or even drop out of school. These challenges can be eased by offering scholarships, free textbooks and other forms of financial assistance so that students can devote more time to their studies. Also, it is important to encourage students to study better and be motivated to do so. Schools and families should ensure that they foster supportive environments that will enable children to develop good study habits and also manage stress. Therefore, a comprehensive strategy that enhances teaching, facilities, socio-economic assistance, and study behavior will enhance the performance of the HSLC exam takers.

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