

Challenges Faced by Tribal Women in Acquiring Education in India: A Brief Review

Damor Parthvee R.^{1*}, Joyal R. Damor², Damor Vernal R.³

ABSTRACT

Tribal communities in hilly and mountainous regions depend on the natural environment for their livelihood. This research paper focuses on tribal education, which is underdeveloped. Despite recognizing its importance, tribal communities are migrating to urban areas for education. Measures and programs are needed to improve teaching methods, infrastructure, and overall conditions in tribal schools. This paper addresses the issue of education and literacy in the tribal community. The paper concludes with suggestions on how individuals, in addition to the government, can enhance education and literacy rates in the tribal community. Additionally, raising awareness about modern methods can enhance their quality of life. It explores the multifaceted challenges that tribal women in India encounter in their pursuit of education. It delves into socio-economic, cultural, and systemic barriers that impede their educational progress and proposes potential solutions to enhance educational accessibility and equity for this marginalized group. The paper covers the Constitution's role, challenges faced by tribal students, and ways to enhance tribal education.

Keywords: Tribal Education, Challenges, Literacy, Culture

Education is a fundamental right and a critical driver of socio-economic development. However, tribal women in India face significant barriers that hinder their access to education. Despite various government initiatives and policies aimed at promoting education among tribal populations, the educational attainment of tribal women remains considerably low compared to their non-tribal counterparts. Education is an unavoidable wealth for achieving peace, liberty, and social justice, and addressing future challenges, as stated in the UNESCO study "Learning the Treasure Within" by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century. It plays a critical role in individual and societal development.

Tribal communities in hilly areas face inadequate education systems, with dilapidated buildings, inadequate facilities, and teacher shortages. Despite these challenges, they recognize the importance of education and are migrating to other regions for better opportunities. They are acquiring higher qualifications, choosing various fields, and

¹Assistant Professor, Children's Research University, Gandhinagar

²Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Agricultural Economics, IGKV, Raipur

³Research Officer, District Statistical Office, Ahmedabad

*Corresponding Author

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engaging in reputable employment, thereby alleviating seclusion and promoting better livelihoods for themselves.

Efforts to promote basic literacy skills among tribal students are crucial for the growth and development of the country. Adivasis, referring to tribal communities, make up approximately nine percent of India's population, with around 87 million individuals. These communities are predominantly found in various states across India. The education system for tribal communities has evolved, focusing primarily on primary education and implementing measures, programs, and strategies to improve it. Additionally, training programs have been introduced for teachers to enhance their ability to impart educational skills to students (Bagai & Nundy, 2009). According to Thakur (2009) highlights the economic, social, and physical disadvantaged status of tribal communities, particularly women. Women are often treated as weaker and secondary, requiring various measures to improve their status. Further attention is needed to promote better livelihood opportunities for these marginalized groups. Arya S. (2012) argue that tribal societies' perspective on educational development overlooks unique challenges, such as sparse population and sporadic residential patterns, and lacks development of programs or policies for tribal education. V. Rajkumar Velusamy (2021) highlights the significant gap in India's education system for tribal people, despite government efforts to improve standards. The article emphasizes the need for inclusive growth and addressing the complex issues of tribal education, highlighting the need for further research and attention.

MAJOR DIFFICULTIES:

Major challenges are stated below,

Financial Issue:

Financial difficulties are a major hindrance to carrying out assignments and activities, particularly when learning. Tribal groups, which are frequently exploited and impoverished, find it difficult to afford learning resources such as textbooks, uniforms, transportation, and supplies. Parents frequently urge their children to engage in income-generating activities, causing challenges for tribal students in acquiring education.

Household Responsibilities:

In tribal communities, children often help with household chores, with girls contributing significantly. They assist with water fetching, cleaning, meal preparation, livestock rearing, and caregiving. They also participate in agricultural activities and forest product collection. Tribal communities rely heavily on environmental conditions, collecting medicinal herbs and wood for cooking. Encouraging children to manage household responsibilities may prevent them from attending school.

Lack of parental support:

Parents help their children with their homework and exams, which is an important part of their academic development. However, due to illiteracy, parental support is sometimes nonexistent in tribal groups. Tribal children recognize the value of education, but they find it difficult to get parental support, which leads to domestic chores and low school attendance.

Difference in language and culture:

For tribal students, language and culture are major obstacles to education. Their livelihood options are influenced by their distinct cultures, traditions, norms, beliefs, and philosophies. Language differences hinder effective communication with teachers and fellow students,

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making it difficult for them to understand academic concepts and adapt to other cultures, norms, and principles.

Lack of facilities and learning materials:

Tribal schools lack essential facilities and amenities, such as teaching materials, technology, furniture, heating and cooling equipment, clean drinking water, restrooms, library, laboratory, playgrounds, and extra-curricular activities. These deficiencies hinder the effective implementation of job duties, causing problems for teachers, staff, and students, leading to unsatisfactory academic outcomes and an increase in student dropout rates.

Tribal students often struggle with obtaining sufficient learning materials due to poverty and financial constraints. These materials, including textbooks, technologies, and internet, are crucial for understanding academic concepts and achieving academic goals. Without these resources, students face challenges in acquiring education. School authorities should ensure libraries and laboratories are well-equipped with books, materials, and technology to promote organized learning.

Poverty:

One of the primary challenges is poverty. According to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2018), many tribal families live below the poverty line, making it difficult to afford educational expenses such as school fees, uniforms, and books. The opportunity cost of sending children, particularly girls, to school is often too high for families who rely on every member to contribute to the household income through labor. Rao and Narain (2010) argue that this economic strain often forces families to prioritize immediate survival needs over long-term educational investments.

Lack of Infrastructure:

Inadequate infrastructure in tribal areas further exacerbates the problem. Schools are often located far from tribal settlements, and the lack of proper transportation facilities makes it difficult for children to attend school regularly. Poorly maintained school buildings, lack of basic amenities like toilets and clean drinking water, and insufficient teaching staff also contribute to the low enrollment and high dropout rates among tribal girls, Mutharayappa and Bhat (2008).

Gender Discrimination:

Gender discrimination is deeply entrenched in many tribal societies. Traditional gender roles often prioritize boys' education over girls', viewing education for girls as unnecessary since they are expected to focus on domestic responsibilities and marriage. This cultural norm significantly limits the educational opportunities available to tribal girls. Rani (2014) notes that challenging these deep-rooted gender biases is crucial to improving educational access for tribal women.

Early Marriage:

Early marriage is another prevalent issue. Many tribal communities practice early marriage, which often results in girls dropping out of school at a young age. Once married, girls are expected to take on household duties, leaving little to no time for education. Kumar (2016) argues that addressing the issue of early marriage is essential to ensuring that tribal girls can continue their education.

Language and Curriculum:

The medium of instruction in most Indian schools is either Hindi or English, languages that many tribal children are not familiar with. This language barrier creates a significant challenge for tribal students, who primarily speak their native dialects. The curriculum is often not adapted to their cultural context, making it difficult for them to relate to and understand the material being taught. Ghosh (2015) suggests that incorporating tribal languages and cultural elements into the curriculum could enhance educational engagement and understanding among tribal students.

Limited Access to Higher Education:

Even if tribal women manage to complete primary and secondary education, access to higher education remains a challenge. There are fewer higher education institutions in tribal areas, and the high cost of tertiary education, coupled with the lack of scholarships and financial aid, makes it difficult for tribal women to pursue further studies. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2018) recommends increasing the number of higher education institutions in tribal regions and providing targeted financial support to tribal students.

MEASURE TO ENHANCE TRIBAL EDUCATION

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 reveals a low enrollment of Scheduled Tribe students compared to their population. High dropout rates are attributed to factors like financial issues, learning disabilities, lack of interest, and inadequate teaching methods. Creating appropriate policies and procedures is another area where the system falters. Girls are disproportionately affected by the high dropout rate. Areas that need to be taken into consideration to enhance the system of education among tribal communities are stated as follows;

Financial assistance:

The lack of financial means, which are essential for pursuing an education, is the reason for the rising dropout rate among indigenous students. Financial aid must be given by schools in accordance with students' merit and high exam results. This aid, which usually takes the kind of scholarships, makes it easier for students to successfully pay for all of their educational costs. However, not all kids may be able to afford this, particularly in cases where schools have limited funding.

Providing proper learning methods:

Teaching-learning methods should be effective and organized based on academic goals, student grade levels, and subjects. Regular tests in schools, advanced techniques in secondary and senior secondary schools, and verbal explanations and practice exercises should all be used by teachers. Subjects are a major factor in choosing instructional strategies as well. It is imperative that teaching-learning strategies be improved in order to foster positive learning environments, improve the educational system, and effectively grow students.

Providing proper learning materials:

The creation of teaching-learning resources is deficient in tribal groups; there are insufficient textbooks, whiteboards, notebooks, charts, posters, models, diagrams, and other reading materials. Technologies like the internet are thought to be essential for improving education. Unfortunately, these resources are scarce in indigenous communities, and their lack of development poses a significant obstacle to obtaining an education. As a result, care should be taken in implementing suitable teaching-learning resources.

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Providing means of transportation:

Tribal students often abandon their studies due to lack of transportation, especially in remote areas with schools. Parents often have to manage their children's transportation, while older students manage it themselves. To increase enrollment and retention, schools should provide means of transportation, such as buses, which can transport students to and from schools. This will help maintain attendance rates and reduce the burden on parents.

Government Initiatives:

The Indian government has implemented several initiatives to improve the educational status of tribal women, such as the establishment of Ashram schools, provision of scholarships, and reservation of seats in higher educational institutions. However, the effectiveness of these programs is often hampered by poor implementation and lack of awareness among the tribal population.

CONCLUSION

Education can help eradicate exploitation and increase awareness, but poverty hinders its pursuit. Indigenous communities face challenges such as lack of awareness, poor economic conditions, migration issues, neglect of girls, lack of educational environment, and inadequate facilities. Additionally, language barriers, child labor, and inadequate teaching manpower contribute to the lack of formal education. Tribal children often attend school due to financial and economic barriers, poor clothing, and transportation issues. Addressing these issues can help improve the situation for tribal communities. Addressing the educational challenges faced by tribal women in India requires a multifaceted approach. This includes improving economic conditions, enhancing infrastructure, challenging gender norms, and adapting the education system to be more inclusive of tribal languages and cultures. Only through sustained and concerted efforts can the educational disparities faced by tribal women be effectively addressed. Collaborative efforts between the government, non-governmental organizations, and tribal communities are essential to create an enabling environment for the education of tribal women. Addressing the educational challenges faced by tribal women in India requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving economic conditions, enhancing infrastructure, challenging gender norms, and adapting the education system to be more inclusive of tribal languages and cultures. Only through sustained and concerted efforts can the educational disparities faced by tribal women be effectively addressed.

Apart from the introduction of programs and schemes, such as, the Right to Education Act in 2009 and other measures aim to enhance tribal education, including financial assistance, appropriate teaching methods, infrastructure, teacher shortages, extracurricular activities, workshops, events, competitions, transportation, and environmental conditions. These measures are crucial for promoting well-being of individuals, communities, and the nation, and should be prioritized by principals, teachers, and community leaders.

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Conflict of Interest

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