



Academic Challenges among the Gond Tribal Adolescents in Rajpur Block of Balrampur District, Chhattisgarh, India

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Abstract

The system of Education in tribal community is not in well-developed state. In terms of educational problems we observed that there are many factors which effects academic performance which is likely to be challenging and these are gradually taking place in tribal educational system that is a major problem that needs solution. The objective of this paper is to analyse the academic challenges among 250 Gond Tribal adolescents in Rajpur block of Balrampur district, Chhattisgarh, India. The major finding of the study was the Gond Tribal students are facing many challenges in academics which were directly and indirectly related to the economic status of their family, socio-cultural activity, personal relationship, Geographical area, language issues, poor educational facilities, poor management, unawareness towards government educational plan and policies runs by the state and central government.

Keywords: Gond, Tribes, Literacy, Education, Enrolment, Academic, Challenges

1. Introduction

Education is the process of controlling an individual's behaviour. One of the most crucial ways to strengthen one's personal endowments, develop one's talents, get over obstacles, and, in the process, increase the opportunities and options available for a long-term improvement in well-being is through education ^[1]. Every individual have the fundamental right of education, and this right should never be restricted. It is among the main forces behind development-oriented change. Amartya Sen recently underlined the importance of education as a determinant of inclusive economic success. So, Education is one of the important significant ways to improve the schedule tribe's social and economic condition ^[2]. The level of education attained by India's underprivileged populations is a strong predictor of their social and economic advancement. At the moment, the tribes' levels of literacy and education trail behind both the general population and the Scheduled Caste community ^[3]. Similarly the language is also played a vital role in the academic achievements such as mother tongue or home language as medium of instruction in early stages of education. Because tribal children's mother tongues are frequently very different from the state's or the region's most widely spoken languages, this assumes increased significance in the context of tribal children's education. Additionally having a local instructor from the same tribal community is preferred ^[4]. India is a home to a variety of indigenous people. Where the population of Scheduled Tribe is represents one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized groups in India. With a population of more than 10.2 crores, India has the largest tribal population in the world. This constitutes 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country ^[5]. The tribes have been viewed as sub humans living in primitive conditions since the 16th century ^[6]. In India there is total 705 tribal groups are found where 42 tribal groups are belongs to Chhattisgarh and among these Gond is one of the major tribal group of Chhattisgarh. The total population of Surguja District (Undivided Surajpur and Balrampur District) is 23,59,886 where after separation the total population of Balrampur district is 7,30,491 in which 3,70,256 are male and 3,60,235 are females with a sex ratio of 973. Balrampur district is a tribal dominated area with the total Tribal population of 4,58,949 where the literacy rate of the of the district is 60.86% and the tribal literacy rate is 53.80 percent ^[5].

1.1 The Gond Tribe

India is the home of different tribal groups which reflects its great ethnic diversity. As per census 2011 There are total 10.43 crore tribal people in the nation, making up 8.6 percent of the overall tribal population, where Chhattisgarh is highly concentrated by tribal population Tribes are aborigines of the country and continue to live in remote and inaccessible hilly and forest area isolated from main stream [7]. In India there is 705 tribal communities are found and among them 42 tribal communities are belongs to Chhattisgarh [5]. The Gond is one of the most significant tribal groups of Chhattisgarh. Gonds live in all over the central India, and in the states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. As "hill people," traditionally they have been associated with hills. They are dominated tribal group in India [8]. The Gond term is derived from the Telugu word Konda which means The-Hills. They call themselves "Koitur" and most of the Gond people speak Gondi dialect, which is closely related to the Dravidians. A few of them use Indo-Aryan dialect [9].

1.2 Problems of Tribal Education

Education of tribal children is a top priority for the government, even in the face of constitutional safeguards and a plethora of government initiatives and programs. The literacy rate of tribal people has never been at the same level as the general population due to a variety of sociocultural, economic,

geographical, and administrative barriers. Education is a key factor in empowering everyone, but especially for the most marginalized groups in society, such as STs. Tribal students suffer from multiple disabilities, with education being one of the main areas of concern [10]. The difference in literacy rates between the tribal population and the general population was 19.7% in 1961, increased to 21.6% in 1991, and then decreased to 14.3% in 2011. If we examine the true barriers to education faced by the tribal community, we will discover that poverty rates are higher among them in both rural and urban locations. Their lack of access to facilities provided by developmental measures, their low status in the socio-economic and political hierarchy, their inadequate participation in institutions, their weak resource base, and their lack of literacy are the main causes of their backwardness and lack of access to education. The reason why, in spite of our best efforts, the less fortunate members of our society do not reap the benefits of development is a serious problem [5].

1.3 Tribal Literacy Rate in India

Literacy is one of the important factors for the development of the tribal groups. If we see the trends of tribal literacy rate since 1961 to 2011 we found that in 1961 the tribal literacy rate was only 8.54 percent which has increase to 63.1 per cent in 2011. where the male literacy rate is 71.7 percent and the female literacy rate is 54.4 percent [5].

Table 1: Literacy Rate of Schedule Tribes In India: 1961-2011

SN.	Census Year	Literacy Rate of Male in Percentage (%)	Literacy Rate of female in Percentage (%)	Total in Percentage (%)
1	1961	13.83	3.16	8.54
2	1971	17.63	4.83	11.39
3	1981	24.52	8.05	16.35
4	1991	40.65	18.19	29.60
5	2001	59.17	34.76	47.10
6	2011	71.70	54.40	63.10

Source: National Commission for SCs & STs, Fifth Report & Census, 2011

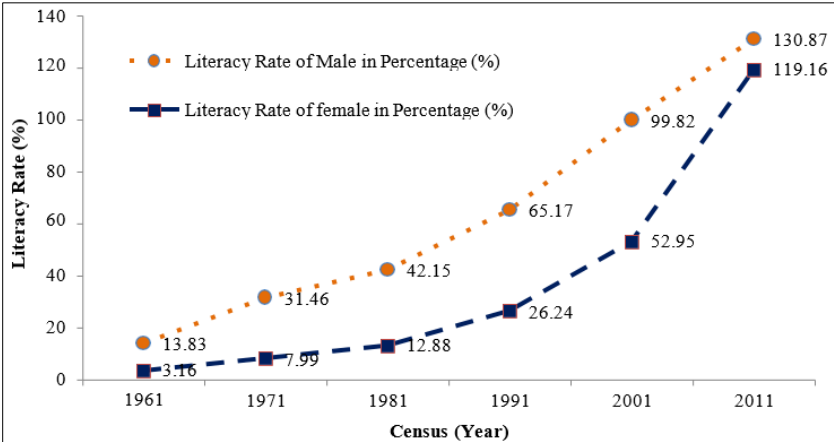


Fig 1: Literacy Rate of Schedule Tribes in India: 1961-2011

Through Table No.1 and Fig. 1 we can observed that the tribal literacy rate is gradually increased among both male and female from the year 1961-2011 and this is a good sign for the process of development. This is only possible after government initiative. The Indian government allocated funds and implemented legislation to facilitate access to enrolment in primary education [5].

2. Aim and Objective

To study the academic status and challenges among the Gond tribal adolescent in Rajpur Block of Balrampur District, Chhattisgarh.

3. Research Methodology

The present study is based on purposive sampling carried out in the homogenous population of Gond who are highly

concentrated in Balrampur District of Chhattisgarh. The data has been collected from School visits during the month of September 2023 to February 2024 among 250 Gond tribal adolescent. The study includes both boys and Girls. To studied the status of their educational status and socio-economic factors affecting their academic performance.

3.1 Ethical Approval

The required permission was taken from the district magistrate, District Education Officer, Block Level Officers, Principal of each school and Parents of the students. This is a part of Ph.D. thesis, and to conduct this study the permission was taken from the Institutional Ethical Committee (IEC), Doctor Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya, Sagar (M.P.) with Proposal no- 2024/10 and IEC Approval no. - DHSGV/IEC/2024/10.

3.2 Materials and Methods

The present study has been carried out among 250 Gond Tribal adolescents (14-19 Years) in Rajpur block of Balrampur district, Chhattisgarh, India on their academic challenges. Data has been collected related to educational status, socio economic

status, socio-cultural factor and Infrastructural Facilities by using Purposive Sampling, Interview schedule and local language based on primary data and secondary data were collected from the Census of India, 2011, Government official websites and other published Articles in authorised journal.

4. Result and discussion

Table 2: Total Enrolled Students in High School and Higher Secondary School of Balrampur District (session 2022-2023)

SN.	Social Category	Class (IX)	Class (X)	Class (XI)	Class(XII)	Total (n)
1	Balrampur	2105	1586	1293	1276	6260
2	Kusmi	1677	1278	1052	1029	5036
3	Rajpur	1977	1337	1142	1162	5618
4	Ramchandrapur	3444	2174	1997	1980	9595
5	Shankargarh	1163	854	877	837	3731
6	Wadrafnagar	3010	2128	1921	2062	9121
Total Enrolled Students		13376	9357	8282	8346	39361

Source: UDISE 2022-2023

This table shows the Total Enrolled Students by social category in High School and Higher Secondary School in Rajpur Block where the total enrolled students of class 9th -12th are (39361) which were distributed in six blocks Balrampur-(6260), Kusmi-(5036), Rajpur- (5618), Ramchandrapur-(9595), Shankargarh-(3731), Wadrafnagar-(9121). And the study is carried out in the Rajpur Block of the district.

Total Enrolled Students by social category in High School and Higher Secondary School in Rajpur Block of Balrampur District (Session 2023-2024)

Table 3:

SN.	Category	Class (IX)	Class (X)	Class (XI)	Class(XII)	Total(n)
1	Total Student	1977	1337	1142	1162	5618
2	ST Student	1197	958	735	698	3588
3	Gond Student	85	48	59	58	250

Source: UDISE 2022-2023

This table shows the Total Enrolled Students by social category in High School and Higher Secondary School in Rajpur Block where the total enrolled students of class 9th -12th are (5618), where (3588) are belongs to Schedule Tribe categories and there is no further community based classification of ST students so among these 3588 ST students 250 students were taken as a sample for the present study who are belongs to Gond community.

Gender wise distribution of Gond tribal students of High School and Higher Secondary School in Rajpur Block of Balrampur District (Session 2023-2024)

Table 4:

SN.	Class	Girls Frequency	Boys Frequency	Total Frequency	%
1	Class (IX)	53	32	85	34%
2	Class (X)	28	20	48	19.2%
3	Class (XI)	35	24	59	23.6%
4	Class(XII)	38	20	58	23.2%
Total Number		154	96	250	100%

This table shows the Gender wise distribution of Gond tribal students of High School and Higher Secondary School in Rajpur Block. The total number of students of class 9th -12th is (250), where 85 students are from class 9th and among them 53 are Girls and 32 are boys, 48 students are from class 10th and among them 28 are Girls and 20 are boys, 59 students are from class 11th and among them 35 are Girls and 24 are boys, and at last 58 students are from class 12th and among them 38 are Girls and 20 are boys. All the participants are belongs to Gond community.

Academic Challenges of Tribal Adolescent

There are many critical issues and problems in the field of tribal education. They are as follows



4.1 Institutional Challenges

- Language Barrier:** Language is one of the important factor which prevents them to access education. In the present study it is observed that due to the language problem students are not able to understand the concept of the lesion and also unable to establish communication with the teachers and it is leading to the termination of their education in some point or the other so, in education Language should not be important Knowledge should be important. Even if it is in their local language.
- Teaching Methods and Material:** In academic the method of teaching and material used in teaching for learning things is the most important factor, which is compulsory in education especially in tribal areas. The

study found that in tribal areas the teaching-learning methods are not in a well-developed state they are using very basic methods with material to teach the lesson, they only made use of Books, Blackboards and Map (In tribal areas) On the other hand, in urban areas, these are made use of books, articles, projects, reports, other reading, charts, graphs, maps, images, pictures, diagrams, models, technologies and the most important thing is internet. So there is a difference between teaching method and material among tribal and rural areas. Because in the tribal areas, if the teaching-learning methods are not in a well- developed state, they are not put into operation in an adequate manner, also Digital Literacy should be promoted in tribal reason for better exploration.

- **Discrimination and Bias:** Teachers are considered as a second parents and the relationship between teacher and students is pure by heart. They play a vital role in the developmental process of students, but due to unusual behaviour of few teachers like during extra curriculum activities in the school teachers are selecting those students who looks good even after not good performance or become biased towards those students which reflect bad impact among them. It shows due to their outer appearance and financial instability students are having feelings of inferiority complex and because of these they are hesitate to share their academic problems to the teachers and they are not able to build a good and healthy relationship with teachers. Such activities may lead to psychological issues and also they may lose their interest in quality education.
- **Academic Fear and Lack of academic interest:** The government should take initiatives of integrated education and skill development courses for those students who lose their interest in academic, they have to promote for skill development course. And the course must be related to their socio-cultural Indigenous knowledge practices to empower the tribal students, and it will help to enhance their economic status as well as the social status.
- **Lack of proper monitoring of Authority:** In the remote tribal areas it has been observed that there is lack of Proper monitoring and poor coordination between the Department of Tribal Welfare and Department of School Education they have to be active and visit the school at least ones in a month so that schools runs properly and students can take advantage of institutions as well as other emotional and psychological supports from the department of tribal welfare. The proper monitoring is also necessary in the development process of tribal students. This is also affecting the educational challenges.

4.2 Socio- economic Challenges

- **Poverty and Attitude of the parents:** Since there is no immediate financial benefit to education so the tribal parents prefer to engage their children in compensatory employment which supplements the family income. The economic condition of the tribal people is so poor that they do not want to leave their children or their labour force to send them to school. The economic condition of the family is one of the reasons for children being deprived of education
- **Limited Representation of community people in Administrative:** The representative of community people in the concern area is one of the important factors for the children in their development process which inspired them for better performance and to become like them. Also feel secure to choose the same platform for their future.
- **Involvement in Domestic task:** The study has found that the engagement of domestic work is one of the common factors among the Gond children which is affecting the academic performance as well as academic achievements. Especially the female students. Except few student whose financial status is comparatively better are the only one who were not engaged in domestic work. Except those majorities of the tribal students are highly engaged in the domestic work. Such as engaged in Cooking, Washing Clothes, House cleaning, Animal husbandry, Seasonal Farming, Selling vegetables in market Ploughing and many other work related to their livelihood etc. every day they work before going to school and after coming back to school. So, they do not get proper time for study and preparation. It is affected their academic performance.
- **Ecological issues:** The geographical condition of Rajpur block is different, at some places it is hilly area and at other places it is plain and where the geographical condition is good, the land is fertile and people do farming well due to

which their economic condition remains balanced. And as a result they send their children outside of the village for the study and in able to approach private schools. But where the geographical condition is not good, they are not able to do good farming and neither irrigation facilities are possible as a result their economic condition is not upgrade as a result they do not send their children to good schools and get them married.

4.3 Socio-cultural Challenges

- **Early age marriage and Engage in performing rituals and Fest and Festival:** Marriage in early age is prevalent among the tribal Community, research suggests that this is one of the main obstacles to their educational attainment. The majority of girls and guys get married after their 12th grade year, or barely after graduating. Because they prioritize their children's social stability over their careers, even the parents are not interested in their children's education. Parents worry about what will happen to their children even after they graduate and pursue higher education. In the end, everyone should get married.
- **Low self-esteem and low confidence:** Tribal Children are very shy by nature they feel hesitate to interact with teachers and other General population because comparatively they have good communication skill, they are frank by nature, they have family support, and overall there approach is better than tribal children. So these positive attitudes may affects and reduce the confidence level and increase inferiority complex among of tribal students. Basically they feel cultural differences they cannot connect with them. To improve self-esteem and confidence Government should be appointed Tribal Teachers in the tribal area and also one counsellor and mentors for the tribal students who visit them at least ones in a month.
- **Drinking habits:** Drinking habits is a beautiful glimpse of rural life, But as long as it's confined to the home Nowadays it is seen even in school going children which is not good for their educational development Tribal Children Special Boys come to school after drinking alcohol, Which is neither good for the health of children nor for their future. Apart from this, they also keep roaming around in every festival after consuming alcohol and do not come to school every day, which is the biggest obstacle in their education.
- **Social media influence:** Social media is one of the major factor which is influencing the study habits and academic performance of adolescent nowadays, which is also observed among the tribal adolescents in Rajpur block. Teachers said that students come to school along with their personal phones and when they complaint to their parents and Parents says that they themselves are very upset with this behaviour of their children. Children force their parents so much that if they do not give them the phone, they will not go to school nor will they study, their parents are forced to take a loan to get them a phone because they also threaten their parents to attempt suicide.
- **Love and Affaires:** Now a days tribal school going students are engaged in other non-teaching activity by making personal relationship which is also affects the academic achievements of the tribal students because to make emotional satisfaction either they bunk off from the classes or not coming school regularly to meet their partners, because of that they are not able to cover the syllabus and due to hesitation problem they are not make clear the remain syllabus to the teachers and as a result they secures less marks or fail in the examination and got distracted from study. Events like this are happening because of lack involvement of parents and teachers in their life. When we talk about the core tribal areas the study

found that the parents of children do not interfere in their children's life especially when we talk about their personal life and personal issues unless it's a big Social issue, the both parents and children are generally not discuss or share their day to day lives and personal issues which is also reflects in their personal development, academic performance and achievements.

4.4. Infrastructural facilities Challenges

- **Inadequate School Infrastructures:** The school's infrastructure is not in good Condition. Except few, but the majority are not because there aren't enough smart classrooms, a playground, a library, or proper classrooms. The science lab is also not poorly managed, there isn't a girls' common area, and the restrooms are broken. Washrooms are in damaged condition with no water supply. Students are having issues, and particularly girls are find difficult to change their pads during their periods, which can cause health issues.
- **Geographical Barrier:** The physical barriers such as Road creates a hindrance for the children of a tribal village to attend the school in a neighbouring village also there are no proper transport facilities, and if transport is available they do not have money to travel daily. In other hand few students are shifted to nearby school and used to live in their relative's house but this is more challenging for them, because study recorded that the relatives are also engaged them in their domestic work and some students are mentally unhappy and they work under pressure of their(relatives) local guardian. They did work even during fever and health issues. And due to their strongest social bond they are not feeling free to share their problems to the relatives as well as the parents.
- **Lack of knowledge about tribal specific Education policies:** Government has taken many Initiatives for the Tribal Education by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare based on twin objectives of socio-economic development and protection against exploitation. It was typically put into effect in regions where the population of Scheduled Tribes made up more than 50% of the total population. Plan for Tribal Welfare: A larger percentage of grants from the federal and state governments have gone into funding elementary, prematriculatory, postmatriculatory and for higher education. But most of the students are not aware of these governmental initiatives and not getting benefitted. The governmental initiatives for the education are as follows.
- **Post-Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Tribe Students:** This scheme was introduced to encourage the Schedule Tribe students who are pursuing Post- Matriculation, in difference courses from various recognized institution through providing financial support. Family income of the student should not be more than 10800 Rs. Per annum, are entitled for this scheme. Objective of this scheme is to give facilities of hostel accommodation to the Schedule Tribe students who are not able to pursue their education because of their financial condition and location of their residence.
- **Vocational Training Centre in Tribal Areas:** Objective of this scheme is to develop the skills which were depending on their qualification. This training would enable to get suitable employment or enable them to become self- independence and self-sufficient
- **Scheme of Top Class Education for ST Students:** This scheme of scholarship was introduced by Ministry of Tribal affairs (MOTA) in the year 2007-2008 to encourage brilliant students of schedule tribe for continuing their study at degree or post-degree level.
- **Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme (RGNF):** In order to encourage the ST population to seek higher education, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA)

implemented RGNF in 2005–2006 such as M. Phil and Ph.D. through providing financial assistance on the behalf of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the University Grant Commission took the responsibility of implement this scheme. Currently this scheme has been named as “National Fellowship for Schedule Tribe” (NFST).

- **National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for ST:** This scheme provides financial support to Schedule Tribe students those who wish to pursue their studies in abroad (Masters, Doctorate, Post-Doctorate) in specified field of Engineering, Technology, and Science.

5. Conclusion

Education is the key of tribal progress. Tribal children participate at comparatively low levels. Even while Indian tribes are developing, this growth is happening at a very sluggish rate. Tribal education will turn into a story of pain, despair, hopelessness and death if the government does not take immediate action to promote indigenous education in inclusive growth and advance tribal education. Therefore, there is a pressing need for various government initiatives, planners, and policy makers to address this issue and increase funding for tribal education in the federal and state budgets. Tribal children should be provided more opportunities and simple access. Ultimately, it can be said that once the issues in tribal education are resolved, the tribal members will be able to improve their overall quality of life, maintain their living conditions in a suitable way, and achieve their academic objectives, all of which will contribute to the improvement of the entire educational system.

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