

Role of Stakeholders in Promoting Higher Education of Tribal Girl Students in Mayurbhanj District of Odisha

Ms. Jashmi Hembram

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, KISS Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Dr. Sujata Acharya

*Associate Professor & Hod, Education, Department of Education,
KISS Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India*

Abstract

Tribal people are comprised of a community that lives in harmony with the Earth, refraining from exploiting its resources. However, despite their sustainable lifestyle, they frequently face exploitation by other people. In India, tribals struggle to secure even the lowest positions in the caste hierarchy. The tribal culture is often alienated due to the influx of modernisation. Many small tribal communities have assimilated into mainstream society. The life of tribal communities once totally associated with and depended on forests and agriculture turned upside down as a result of deforestation, industrialisation, assimilation, urbanisation, invasions, and interventions under the guise of 'mainstreaming tribal communities.' The dispossession or loss of tribal lands occurred during the British colonial era and after India's independence. The majority of tribal people find themselves marginalised in society, struggling to fit into either the modern world or their original habitat. They have become alien to their indigenous culture and their territory. Education is one and only means for upliftment of tribal communities and economic development of whole country. This study is conducted with the tribal community in tribal populated Mayurbhanj District.

Key Words: *Tribal Communities, Mainstreaming, Education, Indigenous Culture, Upliftment*

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I. Introduction

Mayurbhanj, a tribal-majority district in Odisha, faces several challenges in providing education to its people. The scheduled tribe population comprises various tribes, such as Santal, Kolha, Munda, Lodha, Bhuyan, Bathudi, and Bhumija. According to the 2011 census, the total population of Mayurbhanj district is 2,519,738. Among this population, the scheduled tribe community constitutes 1,479,576 individuals, accounting for 58.7% of the total, while the scheduled castes population is 184,682, representing 7.3% of the total population. Geographical obstacles, marked by dense forests and challenging terrains, create barriers to accessibility, particularly in remote villages. A dearth of educational infrastructure further aggravates the issue, leaving students in underserved areas without adequate facilities and resources. Economic constraints multiply the challenge, as many families struggle to meet the financial demands associated with education. Moreover, deep-seated cultural norms sometimes hinder the educational aspirations of girls, contributing to gender disparities. Tribal education faces numerous challenges, encompassing language barriers that hinder access, geographical constraints preventing tribal children from attending neighbouring schools, economic struggles deterring parents from allowing their children to pursue formal education, and an inclination towards immediate economic gains over schooling. Additionally, teacher absenteeism in remote tribal areas affects educational quality, while a lack of proper monitoring results from poor coordination between the Tribal Welfare Department and the School Education Department, intensifying the difficulties faced in advancing tribal education (Tudu, 2018). Tribal communities of Mayurbhanj district not only trail behind the overall population but also lag behind the Scheduled Caste population in terms of literacy and education. The state of tribal education is notably miserable, primarily attributed to factors such as geographical remoteness, poverty, poor health conditions, and the need for additional sources of income. The significant barrier to the successful education of tribal people is their impoverished economic condition (Maharana, 2015).

The investigator believes that the means for uplifting and empowering marginalised masses lie primarily in education, with a particular emphasis on that of girls. The present study attempted to know the involvement of school teachers, community leaders, and parents for promoting higher education among tribal girls in Mayurbhanj district through the analysis of primary data collected from selected sample. The findings of the study can provide valuable suggestions for facilitating educational opportunities for tribal girls. By understanding the specific barriers they face and identifying potential avenues for support, policymakers and

educators can work towards creating an inclusive and empowering educational environment. This, in turn, has the potential to catalyse broader social and economic development, breaking the cycle of marginalisation and contributing to the overall progress of the community.

The Involvement of School Teachers, Community Leaders, and Parents for Promoting Higher Education of Tribal Girls in Mayurbhanj District

The involvement of school teachers, community leaders, and parents is essential for promoting higher education among tribal girls in Mayurbhanj district for several reasons. Firstly, teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' aspirations and providing guidance on educational endeavours. Their encouragement and mentorship can positively influence tribal girls, motivating them to pursue higher education. Community leaders, being influential figures within the community, can advocate for the importance of education, address cultural barriers, and facilitate collaboration between schools and the community. Parents, as primary stakeholders, play a central role in decision-making regarding their children's education. Involving parents fosters a supportive environment at home, where education is valued and encouraged. Furthermore, the collaboration between teachers, community leaders, and parents ensures a holistic approach, addressing challenges comprehensively and promoting a shared vision for the educational advancement of tribal girls. This collective involvement contributes to breaking down barriers, fostering a positive cultural shift, and creating an ecosystem that recognizes and supports the aspirations of tribal girls towards higher education.

Significance of the Study

Education plays a crucial role in driving the progress of tribal communities and the nation as a whole. Mayurbhanj district, ranking as the third most populous in Odisha after Cuttack and Ganjam, harbors a significant tribal population, comprising 58.7%. Unfortunately, there exists a noticeable gender disparity in literacy rates, with tribal girls trailing behind boys. The district faces a concerning issue of high dropout rates among tribal girls in higher education, attributed to factors such as parental and societal unawareness, deeply ingrained social norms, geographical barriers, early marriages, gender biases, and financial constraints. Despite governmental initiatives to promote girls' education, Mayurbhanj struggles with a dismal literacy rate of only 37.84% for girls. Various studies, including Kerai (2017), highlight the persistent gender gap in educational levels and literacy rates in Mayurbhanj, even though progress has been made in increasing overall literacy rates. Incidents of girls dropping out at the primary or secondary school level are reported annually. According to Hansdah and Abhilash (2020), the dropout rate is higher among the 15-16 age group (secondary level) compared to the 6-14 age group (primary level). Certain tribes, such as the Hill Kharias, are particularly underdeveloped, lacking adequate education, awareness, and nourishment, which has left them lagging behind in modern civilization (Tudu&Mohapatra, 2021).

This study focuses on investigating how education can improve the socio-economic status and promote gender equality within this particular demographic. The findings from this research can serve as a valuable resource for shaping policies and interventions designed to enhance higher education prospects for tribal girls in the Mayurbhanj district.

Objective of the Study

To study the involvement of school teachers, community leaders and parents in promoting higher education of tribal girls in the Mayurbhanj district

II. Methodology

The current research was designed to focus on a district-level exploration. Given the nature of the study, a descriptive survey design was employed to gather primary data. The population of this study comprised tribal parents, school teachers, and community leaders. The sample for this study consisted of 50 tribal parents, 50 school teachers and 25 community leaders of Mayurbhanj district. In order to understand the involvement of school teachers, parents and community leaders for promoting higher education of tribal girls in Mayurbhanj district the investigator made interviews with school teachers, parents and community leaders in the selected blocks of the district such as Tiring, Jamada, Bijotola, Thakurmunda, and Khunta regarding. Data were collected from all the respondents, selected using random sampling methods. To collect the necessary data, the researcher developed interview schedule for parents, interview schedule for school teachers, and community leaders. Data collection involved personal visits to all selected schools and villages where the designed tool was administered to the sample. Subsequently, the collected data were analysed using percentage analysis, and interpretations were drawn accordingly.

III. Analysis And Discussion

The Involvement Of Parents For Promoting Higher Education Of Tribal Girls In Mayurbhanj District

In order to recognize the interest and involvement of parents from tribal communities of Mayurbhanj district for promoting higher education of their girl children the investigator conducted interviews with tribal parents in the selected blocks of the Mayurbhanj district. The investigator met a random sample of 50 parents, made rapport with them, and asked the questions as given in the interview schedule. The interview schedule consisted of 18 questions regarding the extent of involvement of parents for promoting higher education of tribal girls. The table 1 presents the number and percentage of affirmative (Yes) and non-affirmative (No) response of tribal parents towards each of the questions asked during the interview.

Table 1

Response of Parents towards the Interview Questions

Sl. No.	Question	Response			
		Yes	%	No	%
1.	Do you get opportunities to involve in your daughter's education?	48	96	2	4
2.	Have you encountered any specific challenges or obstacles in ensuring your daughter's access to education?	46	92	4	8
3.	Do you collaborate with institutional authorities to support your daughter's education?	2	4	48	96
4.	Do you need any support for getting involved in your daughter's education?	46	92	4	8
5.	Do you communicate regularly with teachers about the performance of your daughter in the institution?	20	40	30	60
6.	Do you discuss with family members about your daughters education?	46	92	4	8
7.	Are there any specific cultural practices that interferes your involvement in your daughter's education?	5	10	45	90
8.	Do you ensure regular attendance and punctuality of your daughter in the institution?	46	92	4	8
9.	Do you support your daughter's learning and academic progress at home?	50	100	0	0
10.	Have you experience any discrimination based on gender regarding your daughter's educational rights?	0	0	50	100
11.	Do you seek the help of other family members in supporting your daughter's education?	40	80	10	20
12.	Are there any financial challenges that impede you to support your daughter's education?	17	34	33	66
13.	Does your daughter face any language or cultural barriers that in her education?	4	8	46	92
14.	Do you actively participate in parent-teacher meetings and other institution-related activities?	24	48	26	52
15.	Are there any community organizations or initiatives that you collaborate with to enhance your daughter's higher educational opportunities?	0	0	50	100
16.	Are you able to balance with your work-life and involvement in your daughter's education?	40	80	10	20
17.	Have you witnessed any progress in your daughter's education as a result of your involvement?	38	76	12	24
18.	Do you feel need for additional training or guidance to effectively support your daughter's education?	47	94	3	6

The number and percentage of affirmative and non-affirmative responses during a structured interview, given by the selected sample of parents (N = 50) in Mayurbhanj district regarding their involvement in promoting higher education for their daughters, are shown in table 1.

The findings from the parental interviews in the Mayurbhanj district indicate several key aspects of involvement and challenges in fostering the higher education of tribal girls. A strong foundation for parental support is evident, with a significant majority (96%) reporting ample opportunities to engage in their daughter's education. However, financial hurdles pose a considerable challenge, acknowledged by almost all parents (92%), though they display resilience in overcoming these obstacles through various means. Collaboration with institutional authorities remains limited (4%), indicating a potential gap in interaction between parents and educational institutions. Despite the need for support (92%), particularly financial assistance, communication channels with teachers may benefit from improvement, as only a moderate percentage (40%) reported regular interaction. Family communication is strong (92%), but challenges arising from specific cultural practices impact a minority (10%) of parents. The majority ensures attendance and punctuality (92%), supports learning at home (100%) and seeks family collaboration (80%). Gender-based discrimination is not reported, reinforcing a favourable perception of equality. While financial challenges persist (34%), proactive measures like active participation in school activities (54%) and work-life balance (80%) are noteworthy. Witnessed progress (76%)

stresses the positive impact of parental involvement, yet the majority (94%) expresses a need for additional training or guidance, emphasising the importance of support programmes.

The Involvement Of School Teachers For Promoting Higher Education Of Tribal Girls In Mayurbhanj District

In order to understand the involvement of school teachers for promoting higher education of tribal girls in Mayurbhanj district the investigator made interviews with school teachers in the selected blocks of the district such as Tiring, Jamada, Bijotola, Thakurmunda, and Khunta regarding. The investigator after obtaining permission from authorities visited the teachers individually at the decided time and conducted the interviews. After generating a good rapport with the teachers, the investigator asked the questions in the interview schedule. A random sample of fifty teachers was interviewed and the interview schedules were scored. The interview schedule consisted of 17 questions regarding the involvement of teachers for promoting higher education of tribal girls. The table 2 shows the number and percentage of affirmative (Yes) and non-affirmative (No) response of teachers towards each of the interview questions.

Table 2
Response of School Teachers towards the Interview Questions

Sl. No.	Question	Response			
		Yes	%	No	%
1.	Do you employ any strategy to motivate tribal girls to pursue higher studies?	50	100	0	0
2.	Do you adapt teaching methods to address the needs and challenges faced by tribal girls?	48	96	2	4
3.	Do you have any success stories of positive outcomes resulting from your involvement with tribal girls' education?	48	96	2	4
4.	Have you encountered any specific challenges or obstacles in your efforts to support tribal girls' education?	30	60	20	40
5.	Do you collaborate with other teachers, school administrators, or community members to promote education among tribal girls?	43	86	7	14
6.	Are there any specific cultural or social factors that hinder the higher educational opportunities of tribal girls?	36	72	14	28
7.	Have you ever resolved any cultural or social factors that hamper the higher education of tribal girls?	31	62	19	38
8.	Are you able to maintain a supportive and inclusive learning environment for tribal girls in the classroom?	40	80	10	20
9.	Do you adopt teaching strategies to overcome language or cultural barriers that tribal girls face in their education?	42	84	8	16
10.	Are you able to involve parents and community in supporting the higher education of tribal girls?	48	96	2	4
11.	Do you take measures to ensure equal opportunities and access to education for tribal girls, particularly in terms of enrolment and retention?	42	84	8	16
12.	Do you provide co-curricular activities or initiatives to enhance the educational experience of tribal girls?	49	98	1	2
13.	Do you incorporate ICT into your teaching practices to improve the education of tribal girls?	35	70	15	30
14.	Do you monitor and assess the progress of tribal girls in their learning?	49	98	1	2
15.	Are there any specific assessment methods or tools that you find effective in assessing tribal girls learning?	48	96	2	4
16.	Do you utilise support systems and networks to address the social and emotional well-being of tribal girls?	36	72	14	28
17.	Do you encourage higher education aspirations among tribal girls and support their transition to further studies?	48	96	2	4

The table 2 show the number and percentage of positive and negative responses given by school teachers to a set of questions probing into their efforts and challenges related to promoting higher education among tribal girls.

School teachers highlight their comprehensive and dedicated commitment to supporting the higher education of tribal girls in the Mayurbhanj district. All the teachers use various strategies to motivate them for higher studies, predominantly involving career counselling and success stories sharing. A substantial majority of teachers adapt teaching methods to address unique needs, with 96% acknowledging positive outcomes from their involvement, including students becoming professionals. While challenges in parental awareness and specific obstacles persist for 60% of teachers, collaborative efforts involving 86% in community engagement and SMDC meetings are prevalent. Cultural and social factors hindering higher education opportunities are recognised by 72%, with 62% successfully resolving issues through counselling and awareness. Teachers maintain an inclusive learning environment (80%) and adopt strategies to overcome language and cultural

barriers (84%). Collaboration with parents and communities is robust (96%), ensuring equal opportunities and access (84%). Co-curricular activities (98%), ICT integration (70%), and effective assessment methods (96%) are widely embraced, demonstrating a holistic and supportive approach. Moreover, 96% of teachers actively encourage higher education aspirations and support the transition of tribal girls to further studies, fostering a positive environment for their educational pursuits.

The Involvement Of Community Leaders For Promoting Higher Education Of Tribal Girls In Mayurbhanj District

The investigator made interviews with community leaders in the selected blocks of Mayurbhanj district to get an understanding of the initiatives and interest taken by these leaders for the higher education of tribal girls. Twenty-five leaders were randomly chosen for the interview. A good rapport was created with the leaders and asked the questions as given in the interview schedule. The interview schedule consisted of 12 questions regarding the role of community leaders in promoting higher education of tribal girls.

The table 3 shows the percentage of responses (Yes and No) made by the community leaders towards each of the interview questions.

Table 3

Response of Community Leaders towards the Interview Questions

Sl. No.	Question	Response			
		Yes	%	No	%
1.	Have you worked for promoting higher education to tribal girls?	1	4	24	96
2.	Are tribal girls given adequate support and encouragement from the community for higher education?	1	4	24	96
3.	Have you encountered any challenge while promoting the higher education of tribal girls?	2	8	23	92
4.	Is there any specific initiatives or programmes that have successfully increased enrolment and retention rates of tribal girls in higher education?	1	4	24	96
5.	Do you adopt any strategy to tackle the gender-related disparities in the community's approach towards educating tribal girls?	2	8	23	92
6.	Do you maintain collaboration with local schools, teachers, and parents to create a conducive environment for tribal girls' education?	2	8	23	92
7.	Do you contribute to ensure the participation and engagement of the families and community in supporting the higher education of tribal girls?	24	96	1	4
8.	Is there any impact of community involvement on the educational outcomes of tribal girls?	16	64	9	36
9.	Is there any need for additional support from external stakeholders (such as government agencies and NGOs) to promote tribal girls' higher education?	25	100	0	0
10.	Is there any cultural factor within the community that impede higher education of tribal girls?	0	0	25	100
11.	Is there any inspiring success story or example of positive outcomes from the community's involvement in tribal girls' higher education?	3	12	22	88
12.	Is there anything else you want to share about the community's involvement in promoting higher education among tribal girls?	25	100	0	0

The table 3 shows the number and percentage of affirmative and non-affirmative responses provided by a sample of community leaders in Mayurbhanj district during interviews made with them by the investigator regarding the involvement of these leaders in promoting higher education of tribal girls.

The evaluation of community leaders' responses reveals a mixed picture regarding their involvement in promoting higher education among tribal girls in the district. The community leaders' extent of involvement in promoting higher education for tribal girls appears to be relatively limited. Only a small percentage of leaders (4%) are actively working towards this goal. The perceived lack of community support, with another 4% believing that tribal girls receive adequate encouragement, further emphasises a potential gap in collective community backing for higher education among tribal girls. While there is a strong commitment to community involvement, as indicated by 96% contributing to ensuring family and community participation, the nature of this involvement is primarily limited to providing advice to parents and students. Collaboration with local schools, teachers, and parents is minimal, with only 8% maintaining such collaborations. While 64% believe community involvement impacts educational outcomes positively, inspiring success stories are shared by only 12%, suggesting relatively limited instances of success. This overall picture suggests that while there is a willingness to contribute, the depth and breadth of community leaders' involvement in actively driving initiatives for tribal girls' higher education may need to be expanded and diversified for a more significant impact.

IV. Conclusion

The findings regarding the involvement of school teachers, community leaders, and parents in promoting higher education of tribal girls in the Mayurbhanj district reveal a complex landscape. School teachers exhibit a comprehensive commitment, employing motivational strategies, diverse teaching methods, and proactive initiatives to support tribal girls' higher education. They actively collaborate with communities, address challenges, and maintain a holistic and supportive approach, emphasising the importance of inclusive learning environments. Community leaders, however, demonstrate limited direct engagement in promoting higher education, with minimal active involvement and a perceived lack of community support. Despite a strong commitment to community involvement, the depth of collaboration with schools and parents needs improvement. Parents display a strong foundation for support, overcoming financial challenges with resilience. While family communication is healthy, collaboration with institutions is limited, and communication channels may benefit from enhancement. Despite challenges, parental involvement is witnessed as positively impacting the progress of tribal girls' education.

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