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## Educational Status of Tribal Communities in Jharkhand: Achievements, Challenges and Policy Implications

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### Abstract

Education is one of the key drivers of socio-economic development. However, the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Jharkhand continue to be persistently disadvantaged. This paper analyses literacy rates, enrolment patterns, dropout trends and access to higher education among STs in Jharkhand using Census 2011, UDISE+ 2023–24, AISHE and PLFS 2022–23 data. The findings show that there has been significant progress in literacy, especially among women, but glaring differences among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) where literacy is still below 30 per cent. Primary level enrollment is nearly universal but drops off dramatically at secondary and higher education levels. Dropout rates are particularly high at the upper primary and secondary levels, reflecting structural barriers such as poverty, early marriage and inadequate infrastructure. Despite affirmative action and scholarships, Jharkhand's higher education infrastructure is still underdeveloped compared to the national average. The study highlights the importance of targeted and culturally appropriate interventions to bridge the educational gap and promote inclusive development.

**Keywords:** Dropout, Enrolment Ratio, Gender Disparities, Higher Education

### Introduction

Education is an important factor in the socio-economical development of any community. In the past, tribal communities in Jharkhand have been at a disadvantage in terms of education, health and political participation. The literacy rate among STs has increased since independence but achieving parity with the general population is a challenge. This paper looks at the educational situation of STs in Jharkhand. It focuses on literacy rates, enrollment patterns, dropout trends, and access to higher education. Census 2011 data reveals very low literacy rates among Jharkhand's PVTGs. The Parhaiya community has a literacy rate of 25.6 percent, Birhor 26.4 percent, Savar 26.9 percent, Baiga 29.0 percent, and Korwa 29.4 percent. These figures show significant educational disadvantage and indicate structural barriers like poverty, language issues, remote locations, and limited access to culturally appropriate education. When compared to the general population, Jharkhand's literacy rate among STs is significantly lower. The rate for STs is 57.1 percent, while the state average is 66.4 percent and the national ST average is 59 percent. However, literacy among STs has steadily improved over time. In 1961, only 8.53 percent of STs were literate, compared to 28.3 percent of the general population. By 2011, ST literacy had increased to 59 percent, while the general population reached 73 percent. Recent PLFS data shows further progress, with ST literacy at 73.6 percent in

2022–23 compared to 80.3 percent for the general population. Female literacy has improved significantly, jumping from just 3.16 percent in 1961 to 66.7 percent in 2022–23, though gender gaps still exist.

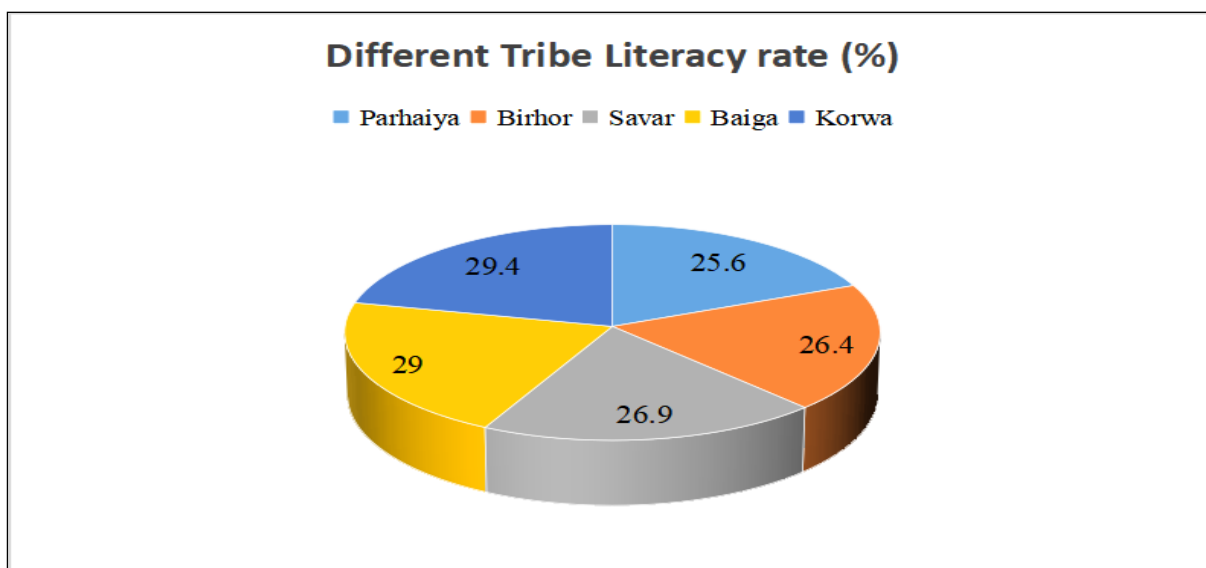


Fig 1: Shows the literacy rate of different tribe of Jharkhand.

Source: Author's Compilation

Table 1: Overall Educational Status for all Category

Sl.No	Education for Social Category	Percentage
1.	General	27%
2.	SC	18%
3.	ST	10%
4.	OBC	45%

Source: UDISE+ 2023-2024 Report.

The distribution of educational participation in India across various social categories is seen in the table. With 45% of the total, the Other Backward Classes (OBC) make up the largest portion, indicating their important role in the educational system. With 27%, the General category comes in second, followed by Scheduled Castes (SC) with 18% and Scheduled Tribes (ST) with 10%. The demographic makeup of students is seen in this breakdown, which also emphasizes the significance of inclusive educational policies that assist the larger OBC population while attending to the needs of historically excluded groups like SCs and STs.

## Review of Literature

Research on education in India has shown that there are many things that stop tribal children from going to school and staying in school. **Anbuselvi and Leeson (2015)** did a study on 250 children in government schools. They found out that it is hard for these children to go to school because they live in areas there are no buses to take them to school and teachers do not want to work in these areas. Also many tribal children are poor do not eat and do not have good medical care. This makes them sick a lot. Not many people know about schools that provide food and a place to stay for children. **Anbuselvi and Leeson** think that we should have schools that teach skills provide a place for teachers to stay and use media to tell people about education. **Babu and Brahmanandam (2016)** talked about government programs that help tribal children go to school. They said that these programs have helped. We still need to do more to keep children in school. They think we should give children food at school have schools that're open at night and teach children in their own language.

**Ramchandran and Deepan (2017)** found out that the state of Tamil Nadu is doing a job of keeping tribal children in school. They think we should teach children about their culture give them skills training and make learning fun. **Kujur (2019)** did a study. Found out that tribal children do not like going to school because it is not relevant to their lives. The schools do not teach them about their culture and language. Reddy thinks we should make sure all children can go to school and that we should teach them in their language.

**Asha (2020)** thinks we need to make sure tribal children get an education so they can get good jobs and improve their lives. Dagar thinks we should give women skills training that is relevant to their lives. **Raziq and Popat (2023)** found out that with new policies there are still many barriers to tribal education. They think we should teach children in their language have schools that provide food and a place to stay and hire teachers from the local community.

**Moitra (2024)** thinks that even though the government has programs to help tribal children go to college not many of them are actually going. She thinks we should work with the community to make college more accessible and relevant to children. **Choudhary and Dewan (2025)** found out that if parents know about the importance of education, they are more likely to send their daughters to school. They think we should tell parents about the importance of education so that all children can go to school.

When we look at all these studies we can see that tribal education in India is facing problems. The government has helped make schools more accessible. We still need to work on keeping children in school and making sure they get a good education. We need to teach children in their language make sure they have food and a place to stay and give them skills training. We also need to make sure that girls have the opportunities as boys. We need to work with the community to make education relevant and meaningful, to children.

## Literacy Trends

More people from ST groups can. Write now than before. In 1961 8.53 percent of STs could read and write while 28.3 percent of the general population could. The number of STs went up to 59 percent by 2011 and it was 73 percent for the general population. New data shows that in 2022-23 73.6 percent of STs are literate compared to 80.3 percent of the population. The number of STs who can read and write has increased a lot from 3.16 percent in 1961 to 66.7 percent in 2022-23. There are still differences in literacy, between males and females.

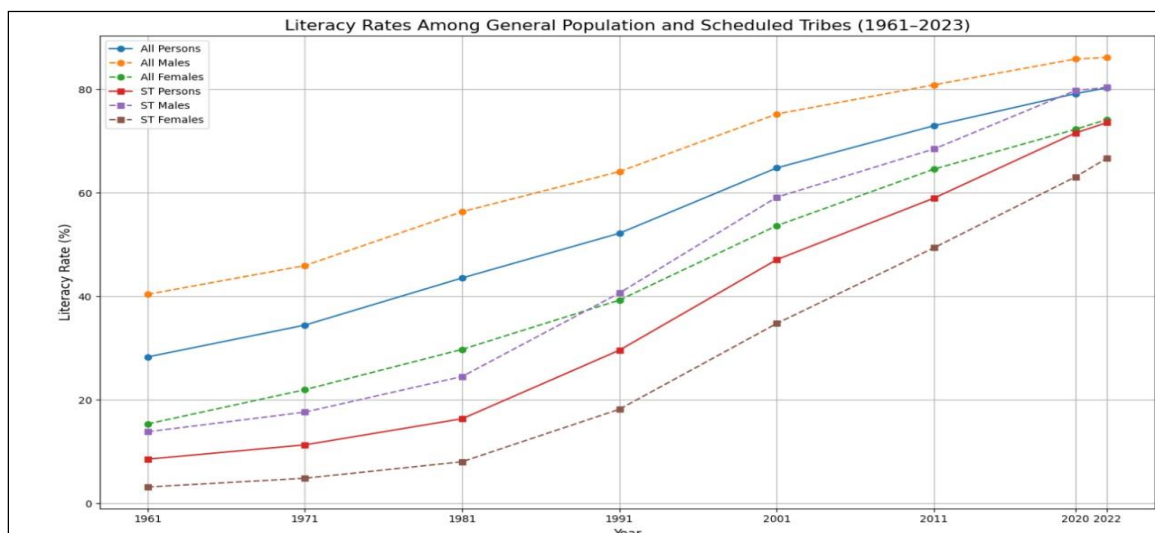


Fig. 2: Shows the trend line of General population and Schedule Tribe.

Source: Author's Compilation

## Dropout Patterns

The Dropout Patterns in education are a big problem. The Dropout rates are a challenge. According to UDISE+ 2023–24, the Dropout rate of students in Jharkhand at the primary level is pretty low at 2.3 percent. This is lower than the average of 2.6 percent. The Dropout rate of tribal students goes up a lot at the upper primary level to 10.3 percent. This is higher than the average of 6.9 percent. The Dropout rate of students remains high at the secondary level with 17.8 percent. This is close to the average of 19.6 percent. So what does this tell us about Dropout Patterns? It shows that while helping students on might work there are other issues, like poverty and early marriage that make it hard for students to stay in school. The Dropout Patterns also show that not having infrastructure is a problem.

Table 2: Dropout rate of Tribal Student

Year	Primary			Upper - Primary			Secondary		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
2017-2018	3.66	3.82	3.48	6.04	5.95	6.14	22.14	22.90	21.36
2018-2019	5.48	5.721	5.23	6.69	6.89	6.46	24.93	26.40	23.38
2019-2020	3.85	4.06	3.61	6.06	6.30	5.81	24.18	25.64	22.65
2020-2021	2.52	2.72	2.31	5.02	5.36	4.69	20.91	22.14	19.65
2021-2022	2.83	3.04	2.60	6.03	6.03	5.70	16.62	17.87	15.33

Source: UDSIE+, Ministry of Education

## Enrollment Ratios

The way kids are signing up for school is really good when they are little. It gets a lot worse as they get older. For the 2023-2024 school year the Gross Enrollment Ratio for Tribes at the elementary school level was 100.3 percent. The girls were doing a little better with 101.6 percent. The boys were at 99.1 percent. When we look at the middle school level the Gross Enrollment Ratio for Scheduled Tribes drops to 57.7 percent. It gets even worse at the high school level where it's 34.8 percent. The girls are always doing a little better than the boys when it comes to signing up for school. Not as many kids are staying in school after they finish elementary school. When we look at college the Gross Enrollment Ratio for Scheduled Tribes is 34.4 percent. This is lower than the Scheduled Castes with 42.8 percent. It is also lower than the average, for the whole state which is 34.5 percent.

Table2: Gross Enrolment Ratio for Both Schedule Tribe and Schedule Caste for the year 2023-24 Jharkhand

Level of Education	ST (2023 - 2024)			SC (2023 - 2024 )		
	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys
Primary	100.3	101.6	99.1	92.6	93.3	91.9
Upper Primary	83.6	84.8	82.3	85.5	87.5	83.7
Elementary	93.9	95.1	92.8	90.0	91.1	88.9
Secondary	57.7	60.2	55.1	59.4	64.0	55.2
Higher Secondary	34.8	37.2	32.4	36.7	40	33.8

Source: UDISE+ 2023 – 24

### Higher Education Infrastructure

The state of Jharkhand has a problem with its higher education infrastructure. It is really limited when you compare it to the rest of the country. Jharkhand has 33 universities. This includes one Central University, five Institutions of National Importance eleven State Public Universities and fifteen State Private Universities. If you look at India as a whole it has a lot universities. 1,168 To be exact. This shows that Jharkhand higher education infrastructure is really small and it is hard for young people from tribes to get access to it. The higher education infrastructure, in Jharkhand is still not good enough.

### Scholarships and Support Schemes

The government has some scholarships and support schemes that help people from the Scheduled Tribes get an education. These scholarships are really important for the Tribes. Every year a lot of Scheduled Tribes students get money from the Pre- and Post-Matric scholarships. Over 800,000 Scheduled Tribes students get this help. The Top-Class Scholarship program is also very helpful for the Scheduled Tribes students. This program supports 150 Scheduled Tribes students. Most of them are studying Engineering and Technology. The National Fellowship Scheme is another program that is helping the Scheduled Tribes scholars. This scheme has helped 60 Scheduled Tribes scholars, from Jharkhand and most of them are doing their Ph.D. The government also has Eklavya Model Residential Schools to give education to the tribal children. There are seven of these schools that are working properly. They have 3,202 students. However there are 82 school buildings that are not being used.

Table 3: No. of SC and ST Beneficiaries for Pre &amp; Post - Matric School Scholarship

Scheme	2017 - 18		2018 - 19		2019 -20		2020 - 21	
	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST
Pre - Matric	321589	774643	342287	826626	309359	715666	250999	523549
Post - Matric	21901	77307	23465	84356	22753	79823	26581	83435

Source: Dept. Of School Education & Literacy, GOJ

Table 4: Top - Class Scholarship in Jharkhand for ST Students.

Sl.No	Streams	Male	Female
1.	Science	5	4
2.	Humanities & Social Science	7	12
3.	Management	12	8
4.	Engg. & Tech	77	25

**EMRS in Jharkhand** - aims to provide quality of education to tribal community children by providing them school in their areas. These schools focus on preserving indigenous culture while imparting modern knowledge and skills. EMRS emphasizes offering to quality education, boarding and facilities to enhance learning experiences for marginalised tribal communities. An amount of 8977.21 lakhs was sanctioned to the state for the same in the financial year 2021 - 22. Currently there is 7 functional EMRS in which 3202 students are enrolled. 82 buildings are yet to become functional.

Table 5: Status of EMRS in Jharkhand

Status	Completed	In Progress	Not Started	Total Buildings
<b>Non - Functional</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Functional</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>

Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs

## Challenges

The situation with education for Scheduled Tribes in Jharkhand is still very tough. There are some tribes like the Parhaiya, Birhor, Savar, Baiga and Korwa that have low literacy rates below 30 percent. This shows that these people are not treated fairly. The problem is even worse for girls and women. They are not as likely to be able to read and write as men especially when it comes to education. A lot of kids do not finish school. They start out in school but then they stop going when they get to upper primary and secondary school. This is because they are poor get married young face problems and do not have good schools in their areas. All kids go to primary school but then fewer and fewer go to secondary school and even fewer go to higher secondary school. This means that it is hard for kids to keep going to school and get an education. It is also hard for people in Jharkhand to get an education because there are not many universities, only 33 compared to the rest of India which has 1,168. This means that the tribal youth do not have chances to go to college. Even though there are programs to help people go to school like scholarships they do not always work out evenly. Some fields like professional ones get more attention while others like humanities and sciences do not get as much. The education of Tribes in Jharkhand is still a big problem. Scheduled Tribes in Jharkhand need help to get a good education. Education for Scheduled Tribes, in Jharkhand is very important.

## Suggestions

To solve these problems we need a plan with parts. First we need to make literacy programs especially for Primitive Very Tribal Groups (PVTGs). These programs should teach things that're important, to their culture and use their own language. This way people who speak languages can still learn. We also need to help girls in areas. We can give them scholarships, build hostels and run campaigns to make people aware of the importance of education. This will help reduce the number of girls who drop out of school and delay marriages. Second we need to focus on keeping students in school at the upper primary and secondary levels. These are the levels where most students drop out. We can teach skills, digital literacy and education that helps them get a job. This way schooling will make sense to tribal communities. Jharkhand needs to build schools and colleges. They should offer courses, not just engineering and technology. They also need to improve Eklavya Model Residential Schools. This way everyone will have a chance to access education. We need to make sure that education, health, nutrition and job programs work together. This will help remove the economic barriers that stop people from getting an education. Lastly we need to make sure that scholarships, fellowships and government schemes reach students fairly and effectively. We need to keep track of these programs and make sure they are working properly.

## Conclusion

The people of Jharkhand the tribal people are not doing very well when it comes to higher education. Even though more people are learning to read and more kids are going to school the tribal people are still having a time. A lot of students drop out of school when they get to the levels. The state of Jharkhand does not have colleges and universities so the tribal youth do not have many chances to get a higher education. Some programs have helped, like help for certain groups of people and scholarships. Jharkhand needs to keep working on this problem and make sure that the tribal people are treated fairly and get the help they need. This will help make sure that everyone in Jharkhand has the chances to get an education and have a good life. The education system in Jharkhand needs to be fair, to the people.

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