



Educational Aspirations of Tribal Students in Higher Education: A Study in a Selected District of Odisha

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ABSTRACT

The higher education of tribal students plays a key role in the socio-cultural and economic development of a nation. Higher education also helps them to develop cognitive skills, knowledge of various disciplines, communicative skills, critical thinking abilities, broad mind-ness and knowledge of flexible modern labour. Thus, the educational aspirations level of tribal students is an important factor for achievement in their lives. The paper aims to find the various factors affecting the educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education. It also reveals the difference in educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education with respect to their gender, streams, and government and private colleges. The research objectives of this paper have been achieved by using a mixed-method approach. The results show that there exists a significant difference in the educational aspirations of tribal male and female students in higher education. On the other hand, the tribal students studying humanities and science as well as enrolment in private and government colleges have no difference in their educational aspirations in higher education.

Keywords: Educational Aspirations, Tribal Students, Higher Education

1. Introduction

Education supports inclusive growth, social cohesion, and accountability in the development of the tribals. Higher education not only provides higher qualifications but also helps the students to develop cognitive skills, knowledge of various disciplines, communicative skills, critical thinking abilities, broad mind-ness and knowledge of flexible modern labour. One of the most critical elements for national development is higher education, which is a powerful tool for building a knowledge and skills-based society in the twenty-first century (Behera, 2015). It plays the principal role in the achievement of sustainable growth and development because higher education focuses on knowledge and skills-based education. Higher education is seen as the biggest investment which contributes to national prosperity (Yorke, 2010). Higher education is the means of economic development as same as social, educational, and political development as well as empowers women to deal with problems and make independent decisions (Sonowa, 2013). Sustainable tribal higher education plays a key role in the socio-cultural and economic development of a nation (Sinha, 2010). The educational aspirations level of tribal students is an important motivating factor for achievement in their lives.

1.1 Educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education

Aspirations are mental processes, which direct or influence the idea, motives, wish and pre-planning of an individual. These aspirations can be expressed through behavioural and conscious psychological ways (Lia, Lib & Zonga, 2008). Thus, the aspiration of an individual is the desire to raise the present status, reputation, fame or honor. It means aspirations are like motivational factors, psychological phenomena drawing towards the determined goal and educational aspiration is the educational plan of an individual for the future (Hooda & Devi, 2018). In other words, the educational aspiration is one's desire to have the amount and type of education. It is affected by many factors such as the personality, socio-economic status of parents, academic achievement and occupational interests. The literature studies conducted in foreign countries suggest that the background of the students, financial capacities of the students, higher education institution features which are attended by them, the reputation of the university, quality choice programs and discipline and English language capacity affected the students' educational aspirations in higher education. Tribals are economically, socially, politically and educationally backward from the mainstream of society. Higher education highly impacts the life of tribal students. It decides the personality, social status, fame, reputation and honor of students in the future as well as influences the academic achievement of the individual students. Educational aspiration of tribal students did reveal a significant positive relationship with their academic achievement and the highly educational achieved tribal students have more educational aspirations in schools (Mohanta, 2021). Higher education is key for preparing tribal students for careers or professions. Non-tribal students have more career aspirations than tribal students (Pal and Sarkar, 2022).

Justification of the study

Higher education is critical for the economic development of the nation. Without education of the backward groups national development cannot be achieved, tribals are a natural national concern and their education is an important aspect of the inclusive growth of the nation. Higher education supports them in improving skills, critical thinking, reasoning, employability, and making them independent. Participation of tribal students in higher education is very few in comparison to other social groups. Increasing their level of educational aspirations in higher education is essential. It was also found in many studies that students who are highly educational aspired have high academic achievement.

Objectives of the study

1. To find the difference in educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education with respect to their gender.
2. To find the difference in educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education with respect to humanities and science streams.
3. To find the difference in educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education with respect to government and private colleges.

Hypothesis of the study

1. There is no significant difference in educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education with respect to their gender.
2. There is no significant difference in educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education with respect to humanities and science streams.
3. There is no significant difference in educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education with respect to government and private colleges.

Research question

- What are the factors affecting educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education?

Methodology of the study

- **Method:** The convergent parallel mixed method (QUAN+QUAL) was used for research work. Further, the descriptive survey method for quantitative research and interview and field observations were used for the qualitative data collection. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and quantitative results were substantiated by qualitative data.
- **Sample:** A total of 120 scheduled tribe students were selected by using the simple random sampling further 55 female and 65 male students from the 5 colleges of Sambalpur Sub-district of Odisha. Among them 10 students were selected 2 from each college, one male and one female on the basis of random sampling focused group discussion.
- **Tool:** The researcher used an adopted three-point Likert Scale "Educational Aspirations Questionnaire" for measuring the educational aspirations of tribal children in higher education which has comprised six sections viz. personal data, student characteristics, dimension of parental influencing, dimensions of peers and teacher influencing, dimensions of collegiate experiences and dimensions of personal performance. Focused group discussion and field observation were used for qualitative data collection.
- **Statistical Technique:** In this study, the researcher used a simple percentage and t-test to compare the educational aspirations with regard to their gender, streams and type of colleges. Qualitative data were analyzed by using thematic content analysis.

Analysis, interpretation and discussion

Table 1 Comparison of educational aspirations between tribal male and female students in higher education

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Level of significance
Male	65	74.43	6.5	2.29	Significant at 0.05 level and not significant at 0.01 level
Female	55	77.60	8.6		

Table value of df 118 at 0.05 level = 1.98 and at 0.01 level = 2.62

When the table-1 is examined, it is found that the mean scores of male and female educational aspirations tribal students in higher education are 74.43 and 77.60 with SDs 6.5 and 8.6 respectively. The t-value of 2.29 is greater than the table value at 0.05 significant levels. It depicts that there exists a significant difference in the educational aspirations of tribal male and female students in higher education. And t-value is less than the table value of 2.62, at 0.01 significant levels. It shows that there is no significant difference in the educational aspirations of male and female tribal students. Hooda and Devi (2018) found female tribal students had higher educational aspirations in comparison to male tribal students.

Qualitative analysis

It was discussed with the tribal student regarding the opportunities provided by the colleges for enhancing their interest, skills in higher education, job opportunities and who were contributing to their higher education. Both male and female tribal students replied that same opportunities and persons, who were contributing to their higher education. As per their response teachers, parents and family members did not discriminate between male and female for higher education. However, they are facing some problems due to lack of opportunities in colleges yet they need extra facilities for enhancing their interest in higher education.

Table 2 Comparison of educational aspirations between humanities and science tribal students in higher education

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Level of significance
Humanities	44	74.25	6.9	1.78	Not significant at 0.05 level and 0.01 level
Science	76	76.82	8		

Table value of df 118 at 0.05 level= 1.98 and at 0.01 level= 2.62

It is revealed from table 2 that the calculated t-value of 1.78 is less than the table value at 0.05 and 0.01 levels, which are 1.98 and 2.62 respectively. Thus, the null hypothesis “there is no significant difference in educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education with respect to humanities and science streams.” is not rejected. It means the tribal students studying in humanities and science have no difference in their educational aspiration in higher education. There is no such difference observation in the educational aspirations of science and humanities tribal students.

Table 3 Comparison of educational aspirations of tribal students between private and government colleges

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Level of significance
Private Colleges	35	77.68	8.5	1.64	Not significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level
Government Colleges	85	75.14	7.3		

Table value of df 118 at 0.05 level= 1.98 and at 0.01 level= 2.62

From the table-3, it is evident from the table the t-value between the private and government college students is 1.64, which is less than the table value at the degree of freedom 118 and significance levels 0.05 and 0.01. The null hypothesis “There is no significant difference in educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education with respect to government and private colleges” is not rejected. It means the educational aspirations of tribal students with respect to their enrolment in private and government college is no different.

Qualitative analysis

As per the type of higher education institution, it is found that students had different responses studying in private and government colleges. Parents, teachers and friends were the principal contributors to the educational selection of tribal students studying in private colleges as well as government colleges. However, the students studying in private colleges said, “Spoken English classes, residential college, VST (Very Similar Test), the outcome of college is enhancing our interest and skills.” On the other hand, the students of Government colleges did not have the same opinion. The students in private colleges had an effective learning environment in comparison to government colleges. It was observed that tribal students studying in private colleges show higher educational aspirations than students of government colleges because they have planning for technical, professional higher education. The type of institution, available facilities, students’ academic achievement, and their strong socio-economic background also affect their educational aspirations.

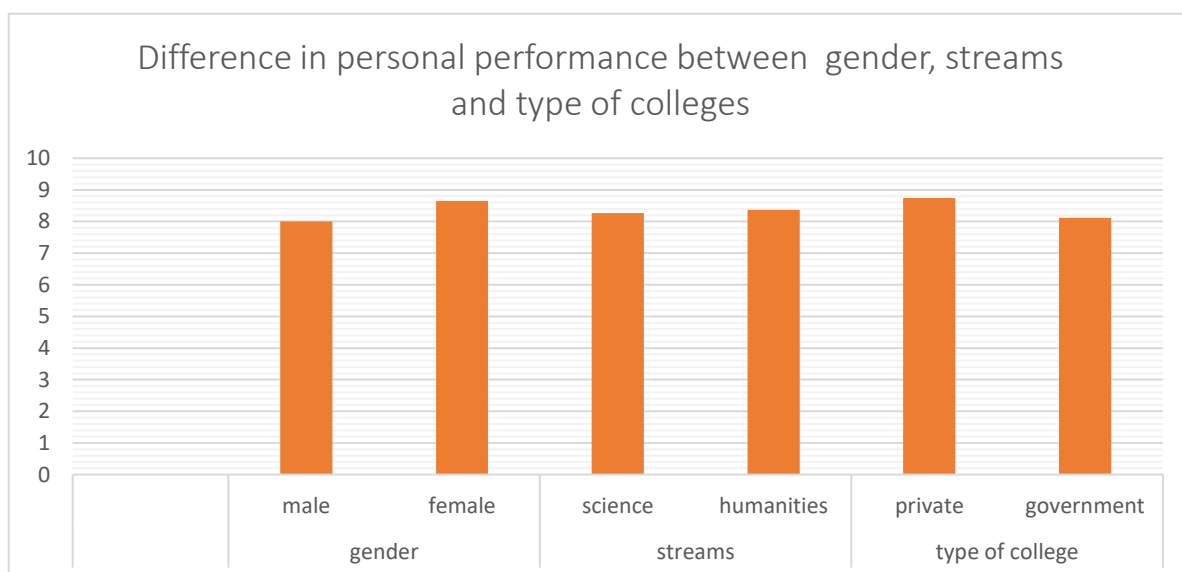
Figure 1 Comparison of personal performance as a dimension of educational aspirations of tribal students with respect to various strata viz. gender, streams and type of colleges

Figure 1 indicates the mean of personal performance in the x-axis and gender, streams and type of colleges in the y-axis. It compares the personal performance as a dimension of educational aspirations of tribal students with respect to their gender; streams and type of colleges. Personal performance like desire for the highest-level degree, types of job preference, and occupational preference after completing a degree affect their educational aspirations.

It depicts that female tribal students and humanities tribal students have greater educational aspirations in comparison to male and science students respectively. Tribal students studying in private colleges have greater educational aspirations in comparison to students in government colleges.

Table 4 Factors affecting educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education

S.N.	Components	Frequency of Responses (in percentage)
1	Student characteristics	68.4
2	Parental factor	84.72
3	Peers and teacher	80.1
4	Collegiate experiences	58.99
5	Factor of personal performance	69.16

The table 6 depicts the various factors affecting the educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education and their frequency of responses in percentage. The factor student characteristics include percentage in last semester; choice and reason for choosing colleges, and reasons for pursuing higher education. On the basis of the analysis of data, 68.4 percent of scheduled tribe students are affected by their characteristics. Parents, peer groups and teachers are the most influencing factors in the educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education which affect 84.72 and 80.1 percent of tribal students respectively. 58.99 percent of tribal students responded about their collegiate experiences like asking questions in class, searching books in the library, discussing with teachers, attending seminars and workshops, discussing with friends, interpersonal relationships, curriculum, organizational learning, teaching strategies, academic and administration, technology and student service affect their educational aspirations. The factor of personal performance affects the educational aspirations of about 69.16 percent of tribal students in higher education. This factor includes their hope to complete the highest qualification, type of job and occupation preference. Among all the above factors the parental factor affects the highest number of tribal students' educational aspirations.

Qualitative analysis

On the basis of interview the various factors are drawn that affect the educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education. The college-going tribal students have different educational aspirations from each other. These are dependent on the opportunities they have enjoyed during their education period. The opportunities from the family, society, educational institutions and government are important. Parents, family members, friends, and teachers have a greater role in selecting the course of study of the students. Out of all students, 50 percent of students replied that they have selected courses like arts, science and commerce according to the choice of their parents. Parents have a greater role in selecting the course of their children. 60 percent of tribal girls' students and 40 percent of tribal boys' students said their parents had decided their course in higher education. It is found parental influence on scheduled tribe students' educational aspiration in higher education is an important factor. During the interview, most of the students replied that friends have contributed to selecting their present course. They had a discussion during the selection of courses and discussed the importance of courses. One of the students said, "I selected the subject of political science as my honours subject because it will guide me in participating in politics as per my friend's suggestion." Hence peer group or friend circle is another factor affecting the educational aspirations of the scheduled tribe students in higher education. Teachers also have a role in affecting the educational aspirations of the scheduled tribe students. Among all interviewees, forty percent of students said that teachers also guided them in selecting the courses in college education. Some of the students are influenced by their family members in selecting the courses in higher education like brother, sister and relatives. A few numbers of students pointed to the father, as the only person who has the greatest contribution to the selection of their courses. One of the female students said, "The poor have made a greater contribution to my life and they motivate me to achieve higher education. I really wish my higher education would help me to work for them." The parents, family members, poor people, institutions and environment have greater contribution in developing the educational aspirations of tribal students.

On the other hand, the condition of family that includes economic factors, socio-cultural factors and parental support are also important factors. It was observed that government colleges had a large number of tribal students whereas private colleges had a smaller number of tribal students. Tribal students of government colleges are identified by their gestures, body language, and appearance, whereas in private colleges tribal students are looked at the same as with other students. Thus, economic support, sociocultural factors, parental support, and opportunities to study in private colleges affect the educational aspirations of the tribe students. While conducting the interview, it was observed that tribal students tried to explain their problems like communication in the classroom, cultural barriers, lack of governmental support, etc. Some students also asked me "whether I was collecting data for the purpose of their scholarship". Probably I searched and called tribe students, they thought that they had been called for their scholarship. This goes on to show that governmental support is also motivating them to build educational aspirations in higher education. These are the factors affecting the educational aspirations of tribal students in higher education. Lia, Lib and Longa, 2008 found family background and financial capacity influence students' chances of aspiring to further education. As well, the type of university attended affected students' educational aspirations.

Conclusion

In the twenty-first century, higher education is a powerful tool for building a knowledge and skills-based society. Higher education helps tribal students to address their economic, social, political, and educational issues as well as makes them confident and enhances their decision-making power. The

parents, peer groups and teachers are the major part of their motivators for attending higher education and play an important role in the selection of programmes and courses. Thus, awareness of higher education among tribal parents and teachers and peer's motivation encourage the tribal students to participate in higher education. On the other hand, the opportunities provided by educational institutions, family and government support also highly encourage the tribal students in higher education. Their aspirations in higher education are the primary for contributing to the achievement of the target gross enrolment rate of NEP 2020 as well as maintaining a just proportion of tribal students GER in higher education.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to express my profound veneration and deep sense of gratitude to my research supervisor, **Dr. Renu Yadav, Assistant Professor, School of Education**, Central University of Haryana for instilling confidence in me through her inspirational words and providing me with valuable comments and criticism on many issues. I will always be indebted to her for constantly rendering timely advice and sparing valuable time as and when required.

I would like to thank **Miss. Madhusmita Behera (Ph. D. Scholar in School of Education, CUH)** helped me every time and provided suggestions. I also like to express my gratitude to **Miss. Shrusti Chamola (Ph. D. Scholar of Department of Educational Finance, NIEPA)** and **Mr. Mohammad Ilyas (Ph. D. Scholar, School Standard and Evaluation Unit, Shaala Siddhi, NIEPA)** have gone through this paper and cross-checked it.

I am especially thankful to Dr. Renu Yadav, Dr. Aarti Yadav, Madhusmita Behera, Parveez Kumar, and Dharitri Biswal who helped me with data analysis in Excel and SPSS.

I also would like to thank all the college principals, teachers, staff and students, who helped and supported me in collecting data.

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