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Educational Challenges Among Tribal Communities in Bankura District of West Bengal.

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ABSTRACT:

Parental awareness of the significance of children's education among the tribal populations of Bankura district, West Bengal, is a pressing concern, shaped by cultural beliefs, economic circumstances, and geographical obstacles. Tribal parents sometimes put employment over education due to economic hardship, resulting in elevated dropout rates and reduced school enrolment, especially among female students. Conventional gender norms and premature marriages further restrict educational prospects for female children. Geographical isolation and restricted access to educational resources intensify these difficulties, hindering parents from enrolling their children in school. Moreover, linguistic obstacles, since numerous tribal youngsters communicate in indigenous languages such as Santali, impede their participation in formal schooling. Notwithstanding these obstacles, governmental efforts like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), and several community-based programmes have been instituted to enhance awareness and provide educational assistance. This study highlights ongoing efforts to raise parents' awareness through local campaigns and government programmes, while also acknowledging the ongoing challenges that need to be addressed to improve education for tribal children in Bankura.

Keywords: Tribal education, parental awareness, financial limitations, educational accessibility, and rural educational challenges.

Introduction:

Education has been widely accepted as a potent instrument for social and economic development, but in several rural and tribal areas of India, access to excellent education continues to pose a substantial issue. The Bankura district in West Bengal hosts a significant tribal population. Notwithstanding several governmental and non-governmental efforts to enhance educational results, literacy rates in indigenous settlements in Bankura continue to be markedly inferior to the district and state norms. According to the 2011 Census, the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population in Bankura district is 368,690, representing approximately 10.25% of the district's total population of 3,596,674. The literacy rate in Bankura district is 70.26%, with male literacy at 80.05% and female literacy at 60.05%.

Tribal groups in Bankura encounter distinct problems that hinder their access to education. These encompass economic limitations, geographical seclusion, linguistic obstacles, cultural convictions, and gender inequalities. Traditionally, several tribal populations depend on agriculture and hard labour for sustenance, which frequently results in parents prioritising employment above education. Moreover, early marriage, especially for females, and cultural norms related to gender roles further obstruct educational chances for women in these areas.

Throughout the years, the government has implemented many efforts, including the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), to enhance literacy rates among indigenous children. Nonetheless, despite these initiatives, the literacy rate among indigenous groups in Bankura continues to be a matter of concern. Gender-based inequities in education are significant, with indigenous girls encountering more obstacles to school than their male counterparts.

This article examines the educational challenges and parental awareness among indigenous groups in Bankura district over recent decades, highlighting the variables that have impacted educational results. It examines the ongoing effects of economic, social, and infrastructural obstacles on tribal education, particularly the distinct problems encountered by girls in these communities.

Objectives of the study:

- ❖ To know to educational challenges of tribal community in Bankura District of West Bengal.
- ❖ To explore the parental awareness about their children education in Bankura District.

Methodology:

This study analyses tribal literacy trends in Bankura district, West Bengal, to identify socio-economic and infrastructural issues that impact educational results. The methodology uses qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to provide a complete picture. The following is the methodology:

1. Data Gathering: To follow changes in literacy rates among indigenous people in Bankura district, the study largely employs secondary data from national and state-level censuses (1991, 2001, and 2011). The data will be used to compare tribal villages to district and state literacy rates over the last few decades. The impact of government initiatives such as MHRD, SSA, and EMRS on tribal education will be examined through government reports and educational surveys.

Bankura District Education Department, NGOs, and community-based organisations publish district-specific educational reports and surveys to address barriers to education for tribal children.

Primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with stakeholders such as local government officials, teachers, NGOs, and tribal community leaders. These interviews will give qualitative data on government programme efficacy and tribal parent and student issues. Conduct focus group discussions (FGDs) with tribal parents, students, and instructors to assess education perspectives, parental attitudes, and socio-economic issues affecting educational decisions. This will measure educational programme awareness and engagement.

2. Data Analysis: The quantitative analysis The literacy rates of indigenous groups will be analysed using secondary data from census and district reports spanning different time points (1991, 2001, 2011). The investigation will compare indigenous children's literacy rates to district and state norms. Excel and SPSS will be used to analyse data and calculate literacy growth rates. A comparative analysis will evaluate literacy gaps between tribal and non-tribal communities, focusing on gender and rural-urban disparities in the district.

A qualitative analysis: Transcription and analysis of interview and focus group responses will be done using theme analysis. This will reveal themes, trends, and issues relating to parental awareness, economic restraints, gender inequities, and government activities. Conducted content analysis of government initiatives and educational interventions to identify tribal education-related content. Results and community comments will determine SSA and EMRS's efficacy.

Analysis & Discussion:

According to the 2011 Census, Scheduled Tribes (STs) represent approximately 10.25% of the total population of Bankura district, West Bengal, reaching over 368,690 persons.

Table-1: Major Tribal-Dominated Blocks in Bankura:2011

Block Name	ST % of Population	Remarks
Raipur	~27.66%	Highest ST concentration in the district.
Ranibandh	~26–28%	One of the most tribal-dominated areas; large Santhal population.
Sarenga	~24–26%	Strong tribal cultural presence.
Simlapal	~18–20%	Mixed tribal communities.
Khatra	~16–18%	Tribal belt zone.
Hirbandh	~14–16%	Significant tribal population.
Chhatna	~10–12%	Spread-out tribal communities.

Source: census of India 2011

The data indicates that Raipur and Ranibandh have the largest tribal populations in Bankura (~27%), followed by Sarenga (~24–26%). Simlapal, Khatra, and Hirbandh have substantial tribal presence, while Chhatna has the lowest (~10-12%). Southern and western blocks are home to tribal populations, primarily Santhals, defining the district's culture and society.

Table-2: Major Tribal Communities in Bankura District

Tribe Name	Population Presence	Key Locations	Cultural & Occupational Features
Santhal	Largest tribal group	Ranibandh, Raipur, Sarenga, Chhatna	Agriculture, festivals like Sohrai & Baha, rich dance/music traditions

Tribe Name	Population Presence	Key Locations	Cultural & Occupational Features
Bhumij	Significant	Mukutmanipur, Simlapal	Agriculturists, celebrate traditional tribal festivals
Munda	Moderate	Mukutmanipur, Raipur	Forest-based livelihoods, occasional migration
Lodha (PVTG)	Small	Raipur, Khatra	Traditionally hunter-gatherers, now involved in agriculture
Savar (PVTG)	Small	Hilly forest areas (Ranibandh, Sarenga)	Traditionally nomadic, forest-based economy
Mahali	Small	Western forest fringe areas	Skilled in bamboo & cane crafts
Kora	Moderate	Hirbandh, Chhatna	Agriculturists, also known for traditional weaving
Oraon	Small	Scattered across district	Agriculturists, some involved in labour migration

Source- Multi sources

Table-3: Livelihood Problems of Tribal Communities in Bankura

Category	Problems
1. Land & Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low land ownership among tribals, especially the Lodha and Savar (PVTGs) - Poor soil quality (laterite soil) and dependence on rain-fed agriculture - Lack of irrigation facilities
2. Forest Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delayed or partial implementation of Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 - Denial of access to Minor Forest Produce (MFP) like Sal leaves, kendu leaves, honey - Conflict with forest departments over land use
3. Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High seasonal unemployment and underemployment - Reliance on daily wage labour or distress migration to nearby states (Jharkhand, Odisha) - Limited access to government schemes like MGNREGA or skill programs
4. Education & Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High dropout rates due to poverty, early marriage, and lack of awareness - Inadequate vocational training, especially for youth - Language barriers and culturally insensitive curricula
5. Healthcare & Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor access to primary healthcare centres' (PHCs) in remote areas - High levels of malnutrition among children and women - Dependence on traditional healers due to cultural and accessibility reasons
6. Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remote villages lack all-weather roads, electricity, and digital connectivity - Limited public transport affecting access to markets and services
7. Market Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tribal artisans and forest produce collectors get low returns due to middlemen - Lack of organized markets for NTFP (Non-Timber Forest Produce) and crafts - Poor financial literacy and exclusion from credit systems

Source- Multi sources

Table: Educational Status Among Tribal Communities in Bankura District (Illustrative Data)

Indicator	Tribal Population	General Population	Source/Remark
Literacy Rate (%)	57.1%	71.4%	Census 2011 (District-wise/ST-specific data)
Male Literacy Rate (%)	65.2%	78.1%	Estimated from Census data
Female Literacy Rate (%)	49.1%	64.5%	Lower due to gender disparities

Indicator	Tribal Population	General Population	Source/Remark
School Enrolment (6–14 years) (%)	79%	92%	MHRD/DISE Reports
Dropout Rate (Age 6–14) (%)	21%	8%	Higher among tribal
Girls Enrolled in Secondary School (%)	52%	73%	Gender gap significant in tribal areas
Schools with Tribal Language Support (%)	<10%	N/A	Minimal mother-tongue instruction
Avg. Distance to Nearest Secondary School (km)	4.8 km	2.2 km	Lack of access in tribal-dominated villages
% of Schools with Separate Toilets for Girls	58%	82%	Poor sanitation in tribal areas
% of Households with First-Gen Learners	66%	34%	High first-gen learner rate among tribes

Source: Census 2011, U-DISE+, and various education surveys and NGO reports

1. Literacy Rate: 57.1% tribal literacy vs. 71.4% general literacy. Tribal inhabitants are educationally disadvantaged by 14%. Low literacy is due to historical marginalisation, economic hardships, and poor schooling.
2. Gender inequality: Tribal Male: 65.2%, Female: 49.1%. The tribal gender gap is 16.1% bigger than the general population. This suggests societal norms and early marriage and safety/sanitation problems still discourage girls' education.
3. School Enrolment (6–14 years): Tribal: 79%, General: 92%. Government programs have increased enrolment, but indigenous youngsters are still behind. Language hurdles, a lack of awareness, and economic pressure to work may cause this.
4. Dropout Rates: Dropout: 21% tribal, 8% general. Poor learning outcomes, language mismatches, infrastructure, and economic need all contribute to high dropout rates. Tribal children often drop out of basic or upper primary school.
5. Secondary school girls' enrolment: 52% tribal, 73% general. Nearly half of indigenous females cannot get more schooling. Lack of separate restrooms, menstrual health education, and family expectations may contribute.
6. School Language Support: Fewer than 10% of schools support indigenous languages. Tribal youngsters struggle with Bengali or English curricula, which is a major obstacle. Lack of mother-tongue education lowers understanding and memory.
7. Physical Access: The average tribal student commute distance to secondary school is 4.8 km. The barrier is especially strong for young girls in rural and wooded places. Risk, transportation, and long walks deter attendance.
8. Sanitary and Gender-Specific Facilities: Only 58% of tribal schools have girl-only restrooms, compared to 82% in general. Poor sanitation causes hygiene issues, especially for teenage females; thus, they drop out.
9. First-Gen Learners: approximate 66% of indigenous students are first-generation. Children without family literacy help struggle with homework, reading, and academic motivation. They need remedial and bridge-learning support.

Interpretation overall: The study shows indigenous groups in Bankura district face systematic educational disadvantages. Government measures have boosted access and enrolment, but large gaps remain: Retention, Quality of education, Gender equality, Cultural relevance, Infrastructure Poverty, distance, language, and social marginalisation perpetuate educational underachievement.

Table-4: Dropout Rates Among ST Students by Block

Block Name	Dropout Rate (%)	Remarks
Indus	17.0	Highest dropout rate; influenced by seasonal migration and limited resources.
Taldangra	16.0	High dropout rate; challenges include economic constraints and accessibility issues.
Bankura-I	14.0	Elevated dropout rate; factors may include poverty and inadequate infrastructure.
Simlapal	9.34	Significant dropout rate; efforts needed to address educational barriers.
Raipur	7.67	Moderate dropout rate; ongoing initiatives aim to improve retention.
Ranibandh	7.16	Moderate dropout rate; challenges include seasonal migration and limited educational infrastructure.
Sarenga	6.39	Lower dropout rate; positive impact from educational programs.

Source- Multi sources

Table-5: Educational Problems Faced by Tribal Students in Bankura District

Problem Area	Description	Impact on Education
Geographical Isolation	Many tribal villages are in remote and hilly regions, far from schools.	Difficulty in accessing schools, long travel distances, increased absenteeism.
Economic Constraints	High poverty levels force children to work or support family income.	Increased dropout rates, child labour, financial barriers to continuing education.
Seasonal Migration	Tribal, especially in rural areas, often migrate seasonally for work (e.g., agriculture, labour).	Disruption of studies, missed school during migration periods.
Lack of Infrastructure	Insufficient number of schools, especially in hilly and forested areas.	Lack of educational facilities, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient resources.
Language and Cultural Barriers	Many tribal students are not fluent in Bengali or Hindi, the primary languages of instruction.	Difficulty in understanding lessons, low academic performance.
Gender Disparities	Tribal girls are often pulled out of school early due to marriage or domestic responsibilities.	Lower education completion rates for girls, reduced opportunities for empowerment.
Social Stigma & Discrimination	Tribal students may face exclusion or discrimination from mainstream society and peers.	Low self-esteem, reluctance to attend school, feeling of alienation.
Limited Access to Quality Teachers	Rural schools often face a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in tribal-dominated blocks.	Poor quality of education, limited educational support, untrained teachers.
Inadequate Awareness of Educational Benefits	Lack of awareness in tribal communities about the importance of education and available scholarships.	Low enrolment rates, high dropout rates, fewer students completing higher education.
Health & Nutrition Issues	Poor nutrition and inadequate healthcare in tribal areas contribute to absenteeism and poor academic performance.	Frequent illness, physical weakness, reduced cognitive abilities.

Source- Multi sources

Table-6: Parental Awareness About Children's Education in Tribal Communities of Bankura District

Factor	Description	Impact on Education
Cultural and Traditional Beliefs	Many tribal families rely on traditional knowledge and practices (e.g., agriculture) rather than formal education.	Limited importance given to formal education, especially for girls.
Economic Constraints	High levels of poverty and economic dependence on children's labour for family income.	Parents prioritize work over education, leading to high dropout rates.
Geographical Isolation	Tribal communities are often located in remote and hilly areas, far from schools.	Limited access to education, making it difficult for parents to send children to school.
Lack of Awareness of Government Schemes	Many parents are unaware of government schemes like scholarships, free meals, and school uniforms.	Low enrolment and high dropout rates due to lack of financial support.
Gender Norms and Early Marriage	Girls are often married at a young age, limiting their access to education.	Increased dropout rates among girls, with fewer opportunities for female education.
Language Barrier	Tribal children often speak languages like Santali, while the medium of instruction in schools is usually Bengali or Hindi.	Poor comprehension, low participation, and disinterest in schooling.
Government & NGO Initiatives	Increased focus on awareness campaigns, community meetings, and the establishment of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) .	Growing enrolment, especially among girls, and better retention rates in schools.
Impact of Seasonal Migration	Tribal families often migrate for work during agricultural seasons, interrupting children's schooling.	Frequent absenteeism, resulting in poor academic performance.

Factor	Description	Impact on Education
Access to Media	Limited access to television, radio, or internet in tribal areas, reducing exposure to education-related content.	Low awareness of educational opportunities, affecting parental attitudes towards schooling.

Source- Multi sources

Conclusion:

The educational environment for indigenous communities in Bankura district, West Bengal, is influenced by socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural issues that affect literacy rates and outcomes. Despite district literacy increases, tribal villages still have low enrolment and retention rates compared to the district and state. Tribal children face economic hardship, geographical isolation, gender stereotypes, and linguistic impediments to excellent education. Key Findings:

- In Bankura district, tribal literacy rates are still much lower than district and state norms, notwithstanding an overall rise in literacy rates.
 - Gender Disparities: Tribal females have greater dropout rates due to early marriage and conventional gender roles compared to boys.
 - Economic Challenges: High dropout rates result from economic constraints and the requirement for children to contribute to home revenue.
 - Geographical Barriers: Remote tribal groups face insufficient educational infrastructure.
 - Making it challenging for students to attend consistently.
- Government initiatives such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) have improved enrolment and retention, but they still struggle to overcome socio-economic hurdles.
- Parental knowledge: Despite better education, cultural and societal attitudes still prioritise economic contributions above education, particularly for girls.
 - Seasonal migration for jobs affects children's schooling, resulting in inconsistent attendance and greater dropout rates.
 - Targeted initiatives, such as upgrading school facilities, gender equality, parental awareness, and economic assistance, are necessary to minimise educational hurdles in indigenous communities.

While progress has been made, tribal education still needs policy reform, community engagement, and infrastructure development to make it more inclusive and accessible for tribal children in the Bankura district.

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