



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

Volume 6, Issue 11, November 2019



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

**Impact Factor: 7.580**



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# **Socioeconomic Barriers to Higher Education for Tribal Girls in Jharkhand**

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper explores the significant educational barriers faced by tribal girls in Jharkhand, including economic hardship, cultural norms, poor educational quality, and institutional deficiencies. These challenges impede access to higher education. Despite government initiatives, ineffective implementation and monitoring limit their impact. The paper emphasizes the need for targeted, context-specific strategies to support educational aspirations and development for tribal girls.

**KEYWORDS:** Educational Barriers, Tribal Girls, Jharkhand.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Jharkhand, a state in eastern India, is home to a significant tribal population, comprising approximately 26% of its total demographic. Despite the state's rich cultural heritage and natural resources, it faces considerable challenges in terms of socioeconomic development<sup>1</sup>. Among the most pressing issues is the educational disparity affecting tribal communities, particularly tribal girls<sup>2</sup>. Higher education, a critical driver of socioeconomic mobility and empowerment, remains largely inaccessible to this marginalized group due to a complex web of socioeconomic barriers. Tribal girls in Jharkhand encounter a multitude of obstacles that impede their educational journey. These barriers are deeply rooted in economic hardship, entrenched gender norms, cultural practices, and systemic deficiencies within the educational infrastructure. Economic constraints often force families to prioritize immediate survival over long-term educational goals, while cultural expectations and early marriage further restrict girls' access to education. Additionally, the quality of education in tribal regions is often compromised by inadequate resources and poorly trained teachers, creating a weak foundation that hinders academic progression. Moreover, institutional barriers such as the lack of nearby higher education facilities and safety concerns exacerbate the challenges faced by tribal girls. The government's efforts to address these issues through policies and programs have been hampered by ineffective implementation and insufficient monitoring, resulting in limited impact on the ground. Understanding and addressing the socioeconomic barriers to higher education for tribal girls in Jharkhand is crucial for fostering an inclusive and equitable society. With examining these challenges in detail, stakeholders can develop targeted strategies to support the educational aspirations of tribal girls, paving the way for their empowerment and the overall development of their communities.

## **II. ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS**

Economic constraints<sup>3</sup> significantly hinder the educational aspirations of tribal girls in Jharkhand. Many tribal families live below the poverty line, making the direct costs of higher education such as tuition fees, books, uniforms, and transportation unaffordable. Additionally, the opportunity costs associated with education are substantial; families often rely on the income generated by their children through labor, and sending girls to school means losing this vital financial support. Even though scholarship programs and financial aid are available, they are frequently insufficient, inadequately distributed, or difficult to access due to bureaucratic hurdles. This economic hardship forces families to prioritize immediate survival needs over the long-term benefits of education, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty and limiting the potential for socioeconomic mobility among tribal girls.

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<sup>1</sup> Jaffee, David (1998). *Levels of Socio-economic Development Theory*

<sup>2</sup> Osler, Audrey; Vincent, Kerry (2003-12-16). *Girls and Exclusion*

<sup>3</sup> Vahabi, Mehrdad (2001). *"The Soft Budget Constraint : A Theoretical Clarification"*

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Volume 6, Issue 11, November 2019

## III. CULTURAL AND SOCIAL NORMS

Cultural and social norms present significant barriers to higher education for tribal girls in Jharkhand. Prevailing gender discrimination within tribal communities often prioritizes the education of boys over girls, reflecting deep-seated beliefs about gender roles and the perceived value of educating daughters. Girls are typically expected to take on domestic responsibilities from a young age, which limits their time and energy for academic pursuits. Additionally, the practice of early marriage is widespread, cutting short educational journeys as girls are married off and expected to focus on household duties and child-rearing. These norms are further reinforced by a lack of educated female role models within the community, which diminishes the motivation and perceived feasibility of higher education for girls. Together, these cultural and social barriers create an environment where the educational aspirations of tribal girls are systematically undermined.

## IV. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

**Negi et.al., (2010).** The study investigated the influence of socio-economic and demographic variables on the utilization of Antenatal Care (ANC) services among tribals and non-tribals. It aimed to understand how factors like age, social class, religion, marital duration, and the number of surviving children affected ANC service use. Researchers used data from the District Level Household Survey under the Reproductive and Child Health Project (DLHS-RCH-II), which collected information from 18,429 currently-married rural women in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand during 2002-04. The findings revealed that tribal women lagged behind in ANC service utilization. Additionally, distance to the nearest public health facility was not a reliable predictor for utilizing public health services, emphasizing that accessibility involves both distance and service quality.

**Sahni, (2012)** explored systemic issues affecting girls' education in India, from national to micro-levels. The study aimed to understand how systemic traits influence access to higher education for girls. Through a multi-layered analysis, they found that while gender parity had improved, disparities persisted due to systemic skews, including inter-state access and medium of instruction. The research revealed how affirmative action policies sometimes created new distortions, highlighting the need for addressing systemic impediments to improve girls' educational access.

**Rani, (2013)** explored the gender dimensions of healthcare services with a focus on reproductive health in Jharkhand. The study found that women, especially from disadvantaged groups, experienced high rates of illness and inadequate medical care. Factors such as unequal food access, heavy workloads, and frequent childbirth contributed to poor health. The study highlighted the economic benefits of improving women's reproductive health and called for targeted interventions to address gender disparities in healthcare.

**Chamberlain, (2013)** analyzed the socio-economic impact of coal mining in Jharkhand post its separation from Bihar. The study aimed to determine if coal mining hindered development. Through statistical and spatial analyses, Chamberlain found that districts with coal mining had lower socio-economic development indicators. The research suggested that while coal mining brought employment, it did not translate to overall regional development, indicating a need for policies addressing mining's adverse socio-economic effects.

**Banerjee et.al., (2015)** studied sexual and reproductive health (SRH) knowledge and behavior among young rural women in Jharkhand. The cross-sectional survey of 1381 women revealed low SRH knowledge and limited decision-making agency. Despite early marriages and childbirth, most women lacked information and relied on informal sources. The study highlighted the need for youth-focused interventions to improve SRH knowledge and agency among young rural women.

**Chatterjee et.al., (2016)** examined the social determinants of undernutrition among children under five in Gumla District, Jharkhand. The study aimed to understand the inequities in undernutrition. Conducting a cross-sectional study of 1070 children, the researchers found that 54.3% were underweight. Multivariate analysis identified poverty as a significant predictor of undernutrition. Disaggregated data revealed variations within tribal communities. Maternal education also influenced nutritional status. The study emphasized poverty and maternal education as critical factors in addressing undernutrition.

**Raj, (2016)** examined the significance of the Rashtriya Uchhtar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) in improving higher education in Jharkhand. Through statistical analysis of educational data, the study assessed RUSA's impact on access, equity, and excellence. Raj found that RUSA provided opportunities for upgrading educational infrastructure and research capabilities. However, the study also noted resistance to change due to inadequate understanding of reforms, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to enhance higher education quality.



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**Singh, (2018)** assessed socio-economic inequalities affecting menstrual hygiene management (MHM) among young women in India. The study used data from the District Level Household and Facility Survey (2008). Analyzing the use of hygienic menstrual absorbents, they found significant inequalities due to factors like lack of household toilets, rural residence, and limited schooling. The study concluded that addressing MHM requires not just subsidized sanitary products but also improvements in basic public health infrastructure.

**Singh, (2018)** investigated depression and stress among rural tribal migrant women in Ranchi, Jharkhand. Using the Beck Depression Inventory and General Health Questionnaire, they sampled 200 women. The study found higher levels of depression and stress among older and tribal women compared to younger and non-tribal groups. The findings indicated a strong correlation between migration status and mental health issues, suggesting the need for targeted mental health interventions for rural migrant women.

**Majumder, (2018)** investigated the low literacy and education levels among the Bhumij tribal community in Jharkhand, India. The research aimed to understand the educational status and the impact of government programs on this community. Using a review of various programs and schemes, Majumder found that many initiatives failed to benefit the Bhumij children due to lack of contextualization, political will, and corruption. The study highlighted the need for targeted and localized educational interventions to address the specific challenges faced by the Bhumij tribe.

## V. EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Substandard Educational Quality<sup>4</sup>:** The quality of primary and secondary education in tribal areas is often poor due to a lack of trained teachers, inadequate educational materials, and insufficient school infrastructure. This weak foundation hampers the academic progress of tribal girls, making it difficult for them to compete and succeed in higher education.

**Language Barriers and Accessibility:** Many tribal students face significant language barriers as the medium of instruction in schools is often Hindi or English, whereas they speak local dialects at home. This language gap makes learning more challenging and can lead to higher dropout rates. Additionally, the physical infrastructure of schools in tribal regions is frequently inadequate, with many schools lacking basic facilities such as clean water, sanitation, and proper classrooms, further deterring attendance and engagement.

## VI. INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS

Institutional barriers significantly impede the access of tribal girls in Jharkhand to higher education. Higher education institutions are often located far from tribal areas, and poor transportation facilities make the journey arduous and unsafe. Safety concerns, both during travel and within educational institutions, further discourage families from sending their daughters to pursue higher studies. Additionally, many colleges and universities lack female-friendly infrastructure, such as safe hostels, adequate sanitary facilities, and healthcare services, which are crucial for ensuring the well-being and comfort of female students. These institutional deficiencies create an unwelcoming and inaccessible environment for tribal girls, thereby limiting their educational opportunities and potential for upward mobility.

## VII. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

**Ineffective Implementation:** While there are policies and programs aimed at promoting the education of tribal girls, their implementation often falls short due to corruption, lack of awareness, and poor governance. These issues result in the intended benefits not reaching the target population effectively, leaving many tribal girls without the necessary support to pursue higher education.

**Insufficient Monitoring and Evaluation:** There is a lack of robust mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impact of educational programs and policies designed for tribal girls. This deficiency leads to gaps in understanding the specific needs and challenges faced by this group, resulting in poorly informed policy adjustments and a continued inability to address the barriers hindering their educational progress.

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<sup>4</sup> ["Goal 4: Quality education"](#). UNDP. Retrieved 13 April 2017.

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## VIII. CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that tribal girls in Jharkhand encounter multifaceted barriers to higher education, such as economic constraints, cultural expectations, inadequate infrastructure, and institutional challenges. Government efforts are hindered by ineffective implementation and monitoring. Addressing these barriers requires targeted interventions to empower tribal girls and promote equitable development in Jharkhand.

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