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Research Paper / Article / Review

# Impact of Traditional Gender Roles on Educational Attainment among Scheduled Tribe Girls

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Abstract: This comprehensive research paper delves into the complex and multifaceted impact of traditional gender roles on the educational attainment of scheduled tribe girls in India. The study employs a robust methodology, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources, as well as qualitative and quantitative tools, to meticulously analyze the various factors contributing to the persistent educational disparities faced by this marginalized group. The findings reveal that the educational advancement of scheduled tribe girls is hindered by a web of deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms, compounded by economic hardships and limited access to quality educational resources. The paper offers a nuanced understanding of these challenges, identifying potential strategies and policy recommendations to address the systemic barriers and promote inclusive and equitable educational opportunities for this vulnerable population. By delving deeper into the interconnected social, cultural, and institutional factors, this research provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and tackling the persistent educational inequities faced by scheduled tribe girls in India.

**Key Words:** Scheduled tribe girls, educational attainment, gender roles, educational equity, socio-cultural barriers, policy interventions

#### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Education is crucial for individual and societal progress, but marginalized groups like scheduled tribe girls often face significant barriers to accessing it (Rao & Sweetman, 2014). Traditional gender roles and societal norms profoundly impact the educational attainment of scheduled tribe girls, leading to disparities in enrollment, retention, and achievement. A key factor contributing to these challenges is the deeply ingrained belief that investing in a daughter's education is less valuable than a son's, as daughters are expected to marry and leave the family, while sons are expected to remain and financially support the family (Bekele, 2020). This mindset leads parents to prioritize their sons' education over their daughters'.

The cultural norms and gendered division of labor within tribal communities hinder the educational progress of scheduled tribe girls. Girls are often expected to perform domestic chores and care for siblings, leaving them with limited time and energy for their studies (Velusamy, 2021). Additionally, the lack of female role models and mentors in the educational system compounds the challenges faced by these girls, as they may lack guidance and support to navigate the educational landscape and aspire to higher goals (Kishore & Babu, 2023). A collaborative approach involving policymakers, educators, and community leaders is necessary to address these challenges. Investing in educational infrastructure and incorporating tribal languages and cultural elements into the curriculum can improve access and foster a sense of belonging among scheduled tribe girls (Vijayasree & Sarada, 2018).

Early childhood interventions can shape positive attitudes about girls' education, while addressing barriers and building on tribal community strengths can create an equitable, inclusive educational system that empowers scheduled tribe girls.

#### 1.1 Background and Significance

Scheduled tribe girls in India face significant barriers to educational attainment due to entrenched gender norms and socioeconomic challenges (Velusamy, 2021). A key factor is the perception within tribal communities that investing in a daughter's education is less valuable than a son's, as daughters are expected to marry and leave the family, while sons

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are expected to remain and provide financial support (Vijayasree & Sarada, 2018). This deeply rooted mindset leads parents to prioritize their sons' education, limiting the educational opportunities available to scheduled tribe girls.

Traditional gender norms and the gendered division of labor in tribal communities hinder the educational advancement of scheduled tribe girls. Girls are expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities over their studies, limiting their time and energy for education. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort to dismantle entrenched gender roles, challenge stereotypes, and provide targeted support. Tackling the root causes can foster an equitable and inclusive educational environment that empowers scheduled tribe girls.

# 1.2 Objectives

The primary objectives of this research paper are:

- 1. Identify the traditional gender roles prevalent in scheduled tribe communities
- 2. Examine the impact of traditional gender roles on the educational achievements of scheduled tribe girls in India
- 3. Identify the social, cultural, and economic factors contributing to the differences in educational outcomes between scheduled tribe girls, their male counterparts, and the general population
- Explore effective strategies and interventions to address the challenges faced by scheduled tribe girls and 4. promote their educational empowerment

# 1.3 Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach, which involved a comprehensive literature review to contextualize the research problem and inform the analysis. The literature review encompassed several key areas:

- 1. Existing research on the educational challenges faced by scheduled tribe girls in India, including factors contributing to disparities in outcomes compared to their male counterparts and the general population.
- 2. Analysis of government policies and initiatives to promote educational development of scheduled tribes, highlighting implementation challenges and the need for more targeted approaches.
- 3. Exploration of how deeply-entrenched traditional gender norms and cultural practices within tribal communities shape and hinder the educational trajectories of scheduled tribe girls.
- 4. Examination of successful community-based and school-based interventions that have addressed educational barriers for scheduled tribe girls, providing insights to inform future empowerment efforts.

The synthesis of findings from this comprehensive literature review enabled the development of a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the profound impact of traditional gender roles on the educational attainment of scheduled tribe girls in India.

#### 2. Literature Review:

Research has shown that students from scheduled tribes have higher dropout rates, lower enrollment in higher education, and poorer academic performance compared to their non-tribal counterparts. These disparities are often linked to socioeconomic factors, insufficient infrastructure, and cultural barriers within tribal communities. (Mukherjee et al., 2016)

Within the broader context of educational challenges faced by scheduled tribes, the issue of gender inequity is particularly pronounced(Velusamy, 2021). Girls from scheduled tribe communities often face a "double disadvantage," as they must navigate the complexities of their tribal identity as well as systemic gender biases(Thamminaina et al., 2020). Patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles that prioritize domestic responsibilities over educational attainment for girls significantly hinder the educational progress of scheduled tribe girls (Kishore & Babu, 2023).

As the studies on tribal education suggest, the policy makers' approach has paid insufficient attention to the culturallylinked education needs of tribal communities, leading to high dropout rates and negatively impacting the overall educational status of tribal girls(P. & Somashekar, 2023). Addressing this complex issue requires a multifaceted approach that considers the unique socio-cultural contexts of scheduled tribe communities and the deeply ingrained gender norms that perpetuate educational inequities.

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#### 2.1 Educational Status of Scheduled Tribes in India

Scheduled tribes in India make up a significant 8.6% of the population (Velusamy, 2021). However, their educational status remains a major concern, with persistent disparities and challenges hindering their academic progress. Existing studies have identified complex challenges faced by tribal communities, including inadequate school infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, language barriers, and socioeconomic factors such as poverty and the need for children to contribute to household responsibilities, all of which can disrupt their educational journey (Mukherjee et al., 2016).

Research has shown significant disparities in the educational attainment of scheduled tribe girls, who lag behind their male peers and the general population in enrollment, retention, and academic performance. These disparities are deeply rooted in the traditional gender roles and sociocultural norms prevalent in tribal communities, which often relegate girls to a subordinate status and prioritize the education of boys over girls (Kishore & Babu, 2023).

#### 2.2 Impact of Traditional Gender Roles

Traditional gender norms and cultural practices deeply entrenched within tribal communities play a pivotal role in shaping the educational trajectories of scheduled tribe girls. These societal expectations and beliefs significantly limit the educational opportunities available to girls from these communities.

Within the tribal context, girls are often socialized from a young age to prioritize domestic responsibilities, such as household chores and childcare, over their educational pursuits (Mohanty et al., 2019). This rigid division of labor within the household, coupled with the widely held perception that investing in a daughter's education is less valuable than investing in a son's, can lead parents to prioritize the education of their male offspring over their female children (Kingdon, 2002). The belief that girls will eventually leave the family upon marriage, while sons are expected to remain and support the family, further contributes to the systematic undervaluation of a daughter's education (Vijayasree & Sarada, 2018).

Traditional gender roles and cultural practices in tribal communities significantly hinder scheduled tribe girls' access to and engagement with formal education, leading to lower enrollment, higher dropout rates, and poorer academic performance compared to their male peers and the general population (Velusamy, 2021). The persistent disparities in educational attainment between scheduled tribe girls, their male counterparts, and the wider population underscore the profound impact of these entrenched gender norms on this marginalized group.

Despite the Indian government's efforts to improve educational access and outcomes for scheduled tribes, their educational status still lags behind the national average and other social groups (Purshottam & Dhingra, 2017). Deeply entrenched patriarchal norms within tribal communities often relegate girls to a subordinate status, prioritizing their domestic responsibilities and marriageability over their educational and professional aspirations (Bhasin, 2004). These gender norms undervalue girls' education, prioritizing their domestic and reproductive roles, leading to higher dropout rates and lower educational attainment among scheduled tribe girls, exacerbated by geographical isolation and lack of infrastructure in many tribal areas (Kaul, 2015).

#### 2.3 Educational Challenges for Scheduled Tribe Girls

Previous studies have highlighted the multifaceted challenges faced by scheduled tribe girls in accessing and succeeding within the formal education system (Emayavaramban et al., 2020). These challenges stem from deeply entrenched traditional gender roles and sociocultural norms that permeate tribal communities. Limited parental support, early marriage and pregnancy, lack of gender-sensitive facilities, and socio-economic factors that prioritize domestic responsibilities over educational pursuits are significant barriers that hinder the educational attainment of scheduled tribe girls (Satyakeerthy et al., 2020).

The medium of instruction in schools is often not the native language of tribal communities, creating a significant language barrier that impedes learning and engagement (P. & Somashekar, 2023). Additionally, the lack of availability of teachers from within the tribal community, coupled with the predominance of male teachers in day schools, further exacerbate the challenges faced by scheduled tribe girls (Mohanty et al., 2019). This lack of representation and role models from their own community can be demotivating and alienating for these students.

The educational attainment of scheduled tribe girls is significantly hindered by gender-based challenges, including inadequate school infrastructure and teaching practices, as well as socioeconomic factors like poverty and the burden of domestic duties. Early marriage, pregnancy, and disproportionate household responsibilities can disrupt their

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educational trajectories, leading to higher dropout rates and poorer academic performance compared to their male peers and the general population (Goel & Husain, 2018). Deeper research is needed to examine how traditional gender roles and sociocultural norms shape the educational experiences and outcomes of scheduled tribe girls. Understanding this complex interplay of gender, culture, and education is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies to address the persistent disparities in educational attainment within this marginalized group.

# 3. Traditional Gender Roles Affecting Education:

The deeply rooted traditional gender norms in tribal communities create significant barriers to the educational attainment of scheduled tribe girls. The disproportionate burden of domestic responsibilities assigned to girls limits their time and energy for studies, leading to absenteeism and early dropout (Nambissan, 2005). Families often prioritize the education of boys, who are perceived to have greater economic potential and fewer domestic duties, further exacerbating the disparities in educational outcomes between scheduled tribe girls and their male counterparts (Joshi, 2010).

The prevalent practice of early marriage and pregnancy within certain tribal communities disrupts the educational trajectories of girls, forcing them to prioritize domestic and reproductive roles over academic pursuits. This intergenerational cycle, rooted in cultural norms and economic factors, perpetuates limited educational attainment among scheduled tribe girls, depriving them of opportunities for continued education and professional development (Mohanty et al., 2019).

# 3.1 Domestic Responsibilities

Within many scheduled tribe communities, girls are often expected to shoulder a significant portion of household chores and caregiving responsibilities. These include tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and caring for younger siblings (Ghosh & Deb, 2017). This imbalance in domestic labor allocation not only limits the time and energy available for girls to focus on their studies but can also lead to school absenteeism and early dropout. Families may prioritize the education of boys, as they are perceived to have greater economic potential and are less burdened by domestic duties (Kingdon, 2002). Previous studies have highlighted the disproportionate domestic responsibilities shouldered by adolescent girls in tribal communities, which can significantly impact their educational attainment (Sharma et al., 2007). Sibling care and assisting in agricultural activities during peak seasons are also common household responsibilities that often take precedence over girls' schooling (Mohanty et al., 2019).

#### 3.2 Early Marriage and Pregnancy

Another major obstacle to the education of scheduled tribe girls is the practice of early marriage and pregnancy. In some tribal communities, girls are often married at a young age, before the legal age for marriage (P. & Somashekar, 2023). This disrupts their studies, as they are expected to focus on domestic and reproductive responsibilities instead of their academic pursuits. Early pregnancy can further worsen the challenges, as girls may have to leave school to care for their children, limiting their chances for continued education and career development in India (Goel & Husain, 2018). The cyclical nature of these practices, stemming from cultural norms and economic factors, can perpetuate the cycle of low educational attainment among scheduled tribe girls (Patel et al., 2018).

#### 3.3 Parental Perceptions and Support

Parental attitudes and beliefs about the importance of educating girls can significantly affect the educational outcomes of scheduled tribe girls. Some tribal communities may perceive that investing in boys' education is more valuable, as they are seen as the primary breadwinners and inheritors of family assets (Kingdon, 2002).

This mindset can lead to a lack of parental support and investment in the education of scheduled tribe girls, resulting in lower enrollment, higher dropout rates, and limited access to higher education (Tribal Education, 2016). Poverty and the perceived opportunity cost of sending girls to school further compound this challenge, as families may prioritize the immediate economic contributions of girls over their long-term educational and professional development.

Parents' educational backgrounds and exposure to modern values can also shape their perceptions and support for their daughters' education (Mohanty et al., 2019). A lack of awareness about the importance of education and its potential benefits for individuals and communities can perpetuate the educational inequalities faced by scheduled tribe girls. Overcoming these deeply entrenched gender biases and encouraging parental support for the education of scheduled tribe girls are crucial steps in addressing these disparities.

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## 3.4 Sexual Vulnerability

The risk of sexual violence and harassment can hinder the educational attainment of tribal girls. Prevailing gender norms and power dynamics make them vulnerable to sexual abuse, leading to absenteeism, mental health issues, and early dropout (Mohanty et al., 2019). The lack of safe learning environments and inadequate response from authorities exacerbate this problem (Behounek, 2020). To address this, a comprehensive approach is needed that prioritizes the safety and well-being of tribal girls. This includes strengthening child protection, implementing codes of conduct, and ensuring responsive grievance redressal systems. Community-based interventions that challenge harmful gender norms and empower girls to advocate for their rights can also address the root causes of sexual violence and harassment (A rigorous review of global research evidence on policy and practice on school-related gender-based violence | Global Partnership for Education, 2016). Collaborative efforts between schools, authorities, and women's rights organizations are essential to ensure tribal girls can access education without fear of exploitation or abuse.

# 4. Addressing the Challenges: Strategies for Empowerment:

To address the impact of traditional gender roles on the educational attainment of scheduled tribe girls, a multifaceted approach is needed. This should include community-based initiatives that challenge gender stereotypes, empower women and girls, and promote the value of girls' education within tribal communities. Simultaneously, efforts must be made to strengthen educational infrastructure and accessibility in tribal regions (Joshi, 2010). Empowering scheduled tribe girls through skill development, career guidance, and mentorship can be a powerful catalyst for change, helping them break free from the constraints of traditional gender roles and societal expectations (Khatri., 2016). Collaborative efforts involving various stakeholders can facilitate the implementation and sustainability of these transformative initiatives.

Policy reforms and institutional support are crucial to address the barriers limiting the educational opportunities for scheduled tribe girls. (P. & Somashekar, 2023). Strengthening enforcement of laws on child marriage, compulsory education, and gender discrimination, along with targeted scholarships and affirmative action, can create a more enabling environment for their educational empowerment (Thamminaina et al., 2020).

A comprehensive, collaborative approach that integrates traditional values and modern educational strategies is crucial to address the deep-rooted cultural and socioeconomic barriers limiting the educational attainment of scheduled tribe girls (Emayavaramban et al., 2020). Tackling this multifaceted challenge through a holistic plan can unleash the immense potential of this vulnerable group and drive their educational and social empowerment.

#### 4.1 Community-Based Initiatives

Engaging with local tribal communities and their leaders is crucial to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education. Community-based programs that challenge gender stereotypes, promote equality, and advocate for scheduled tribe girls' education can transform social norms and attitudes. These programs empower women and girls to become champions for change, addressing ingrained biases and advocating for better educational access (Halim et al., 2016). By working closely with respected community leaders and elders, these initiatives can foster a shared understanding of the value of girls' education and its long-term benefits for the community. These efforts can involve awareness campaigns, dialogues with elders, and the involvement of influential role models to inspire and motivate girls. Stakeholders can develop contextually relevant and culturally appropriate interventions that resonate with scheduled tribe girls and their families, incorporating regular dialogue and feedback to address their specific needs and concerns (Bhatia et al., 2020). Involving community leaders as champions and role models can significantly enhance the programs' reach and impact, encouraging more girls to pursue their educational aspirations.

#### 4.2 Strengthening Educational Infrastructure and Access

Improving the availability and accessibility of quality educational institutions in tribal regions is crucial to enhance the educational opportunities for scheduled tribe girls. This may involve strategic investments to establish more schools and educational facilities within close proximity to tribal communities, ensuring that girls do not have to travel long distances to access education (Joshi, 2010). Additionally, enhancing transportation infrastructure, such as providing safe and reliable bus services, can significantly improve the accessibility of these educational institutions, especially for girls who may face mobility constraints due to cultural norms or safety concerns(Bhatnagar & Bolia, 2019). Alongside physical infrastructure, it is equally important to address the quality of education and the learning environment within these institutions.

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Targeted financial assistance, such as scholarships, tuition waivers, and subsidies, can help address the economic barriers that prevent scheduled tribe girls from pursuing their education (Joshi, 2010). Additionally, developing gendersensitive curricula and teaching practices that incorporate the cultural heritage, perspectives, and lived experiences of scheduled tribe girls can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, empowering them to thrive academically and reach their full potential (Emayavaramban et al., 2020).

# 4.3 Empowering Girls through Skill Development and Mentorship

Skill development, career guidance, and mentorship programs can empower scheduled tribe girls to achieve their educational and professional goals. These initiatives equip girls with skills, knowledge, and confidence to overcome societal barriers and pursue their aspirations (Devi & Dhal, 2020). By developing practical skills, exploring diverse careers, and receiving guidance from mentors, girls can envision a future beyond traditional gender roles. This instills a sense of agency and determination, encouraging them to persist in their educational journeys. Mentorship programs can be highly impactful, connecting scheduled tribe girls with successful role models who can inspire, support, and advise them. Collaborating with local organizations and community leaders can facilitate the implementation and sustainability of these empowering programs.

## 4.4 Policy Reforms and Institutional Support

Comprehensive policy reforms and institutional support are crucial to address the barriers limiting the educational attainment of scheduled tribe girls. This can involve targeted scholarships, reservation policies, and affirmative action to improve their access to educational opportunities (Acharya, 2009). Strengthening the enforcement of laws on child marriage, compulsory education, and gender discrimination can also create a more enabling environment for their educational empowerment (Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021). Institutions like schools, local government, and women's commissions can play a vital role in monitoring policy implementation, addressing grievances, and advocating for the rights of scheduled tribe girls.

# 4.5 Balancing Tradition and Education

Balancing tradition and education is a pivotal challenge for empowering scheduled tribe girls and enabling their educational aspirations. Traditional cultural practices significantly shape the lived experiences and decisions of these communities, and respecting this identity is crucial. Yet, education can also be a transformative tool, allowing scheduled tribe girls to challenge limiting gender norms and unlock new possibilities (Tribal Education, 2016).

Balancing traditional practices and modern educational approaches is crucial to create an inclusive learning environment for Scheduled Tribe girls that respects their cultural heritage while empowering them academically (Panda & Ojha, 2021). Community-driven initiatives and collaborations between educators, policymakers, and tribal leaders can foster a sense of cultural continuity within the educational system for Scheduled Tribe girls. This helps them pursue their educational goals confidently without having to abandon their cultural roots (P. & Somashekar, 2023). Maintaining this delicate balance between tradition and education is crucial to unlocking the transformative power of learning for these marginalized communities.

#### 5. Discussion:

The research on how traditional gender roles impact the educational achievement of Scheduled Tribe girls in India has revealed a complex and multifaceted challenge that requires a comprehensive and sustained approach (Kaul, 2015). The findings highlight the persistent barriers these girls face, including socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and institutional biases, all of which hinder their access to quality education and the realization of their full potential. The literature review emphasizes the need for a multi-pronged strategy that addresses the root causes of gender inequality and empowers Scheduled Tribe girls to overcome the limitations imposed by traditional gender roles. This involves interventions that enhance educational infrastructure, improve teaching and learning quality, and foster an inclusive and supportive environment in educational institutions. Complementary initiatives focusing on skill development, career guidance, and mentorship programs can help Scheduled Tribe girls envision and achieve their educational and professional goals (Tribal Education, 2016). Crucially, the research underscores the importance of balancing the preservation of cultural identity and traditions with the transformative potential of education. By developing educational approaches sensitive to the unique contexts of Scheduled Tribe communities, stakeholders can create a synergy between tradition and modernization, enabling these girls to navigate their academic journeys while maintaining a strong sense of cultural belonging (P. & Somashekar, 2023).

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#### 6. Policy Implications and Recommendation

This research underscores the need for comprehensive policy reforms and institutional support to address the persistent educational disparities faced by scheduled tribe girls. First, implementing targeted scholarship programs, reservation policies, and affirmative action can significantly improve scheduled tribe girls' access to educational opportunities. These interventions must be designed in close consultation with tribal communities to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Second, strengthening the enforcement of laws and regulations related to child marriage, compulsory education, and gender-based discrimination can create a more enabling environment for the educational empowerment of scheduled tribe girls. Third, the active involvement and capacity building of local institutions, such as schools, government bodies, and women's commissions, can play a crucial role in monitoring policy implementation, addressing grievances, and advocating for the rights of scheduled tribe girls. Adopting a multi-pronged approach that combines targeted policy interventions, community engagement, and institutional strengthening can significantly improve the educational outcomes of scheduled tribe girls. These recommendations address immediate barriers and lay the foundation for long-term, sustainable change in the socioeconomic status and well-being of these marginalized communities.

#### 7. CONCLUSION:

The study highlights the profound influence of traditional gender roles on the educational aspirations and attainment of Scheduled Tribe girls. By integrating cultural dimensions into educational programs, interventions can become more effective, inclusive, and responsive. The research calls for a collaborative, holistic approach to create a conducive, empowering, and transformative educational environment that enables Scheduled Tribe girls to realize their academic potential without abandoning their cultural identity. The findings reinforce the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms, institutional support, and community initiatives to address the persistent educational disparities faced by Scheduled Tribe girls. Tackling this challenge through a multidimensional lens can empower this vulnerable population and pave the way for their meaningful socioeconomic advancement and a more equitable, inclusive society.

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