

## **Economic Empowerment of Tribal Women through Education in Madurai District**

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### **Abstract**

The scheduled tribes are geographically, socially and economically isolated communities. The tribal women are considered as an economic asset in their communities because they play an essential role in social, economic and educational aspects. During the post-independence, the government gave more importance for the educational and economic empowerment of tribal society but still they are lagging in various paths of life such as employment, education, and empowerment. The status of tribal women in India is quite contradictory. The Indian constitution has given equality of opportunities to all the sections of society including tribal women. Only by increasing the access of education their social, economic and individual participation would step up. The present paper identifies the status of educational empowerment of tribal women. The policy makers should link their education and culture to reduce the dropout levels. This would increase their overall educational condition.

**Keywords:** Education, Tribes, Empowerment, Dropouts.

### **Introduction**

Education is equally important for both men and women in the society. It helps both men and women to identify the proper ways to attain development. Yet, tribal women are facing the problem of ignorance more than men. The aim of education is to change their norms, culture and lifestyle. This would aid them to become economically independent. In order to empower them, various skills training programmes needs to be implemented. They have to analyze their living standards, rights and responsibilities and that would increase their participation in all fields. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the tribal women's economic contribution towards nation has increased. This will lead to increase in employment opportunities for women and women empowerment and facilitate in removing the bias between women and men. There is an urgent need for the equal participation of women along with men in the aspects of social, economic and political conditions of national development.

This would help the tribal women to reduce poverty, increases the role of education, improving health and also conserving their natural habitat by monitoring the ecological degradation regularly in their natural home.

## **Background**

The scheduled tribes are minority groups; they are around 8.6 percent of the total population of India as per census 2011. The overall 93 percent of the tribes live in rural areas and they are involved in agricultural activities. According to the census 2011, Arunachal Pradesh has a largest number of tribal communities, whereas Uttar Pradesh has a smallest number of tribal communities in India. It is to be noted that Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry have no Scheduled tribe communities. The role of tribal women is decisive and they are about half of the population in their communities. The tribal women are more important than other social groups because they work hard and the family economy entirely depends on them. They work as laborer in factories, construction, households for increasing the contribution towards their family. Moreover, the tribal women are facing problems and challenges in getting a feasible livelihood. Many government programmes were implemented towards the tribal women empowerment. This would improve their socio-economic conditions and educational empowerment.

## **Review of Literature**

Brahmanandam and Bosu in 2016 conducted a study on “Educational Status among the Scheduled Tribes: Issues and Challenges”. The purpose of this study was to examine the scheduled tribe’s literacy rate, dropout rate and its educational gap among other social groups in India. This study has been supported by the study conducted by Kumari (2018) on “Challenging Issue of Tribal Women Education in India” revealed that the aim of Universal Education has not been achieved in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The researcher has suggested that the government should execute more policies on improving the standard of higher education.

## **Objectives**

- To study the levels of education, dropouts of Scheduled tribes’ population in Madurai
- To analyze the major problems faced by the Scheduled tribes women and suggest ways to solve them

## **Methodology**

This study is based on secondary sources. The data have been taken from the Census of India 2011, Annual Report of Ministry of Labor & Employment

(2012-13). Keeping the nature of the study descriptive research design has been used. The purpose of this study is to describe the problems faced by tribal women and also to provide suggestions to solve them. The data for the present study related to scheduled tribes' population, literacy and educational levels have taken from the census reports of 2011.

**Table 1: Classification based on Female Scheduled Tribes' Educational Levels**

Year	Educational Level	Total Female Population of Scheduled Tribes	Literate Female Scheduled Tribes Population	Share (in percentage)
2011	Primary	104361	22746	22.00
	Middle	81407	20769	26.00
	Secondary	55050	12949	24.00
	Higher Secondary	51530	0	0.00

*Source: Census Report 2011*

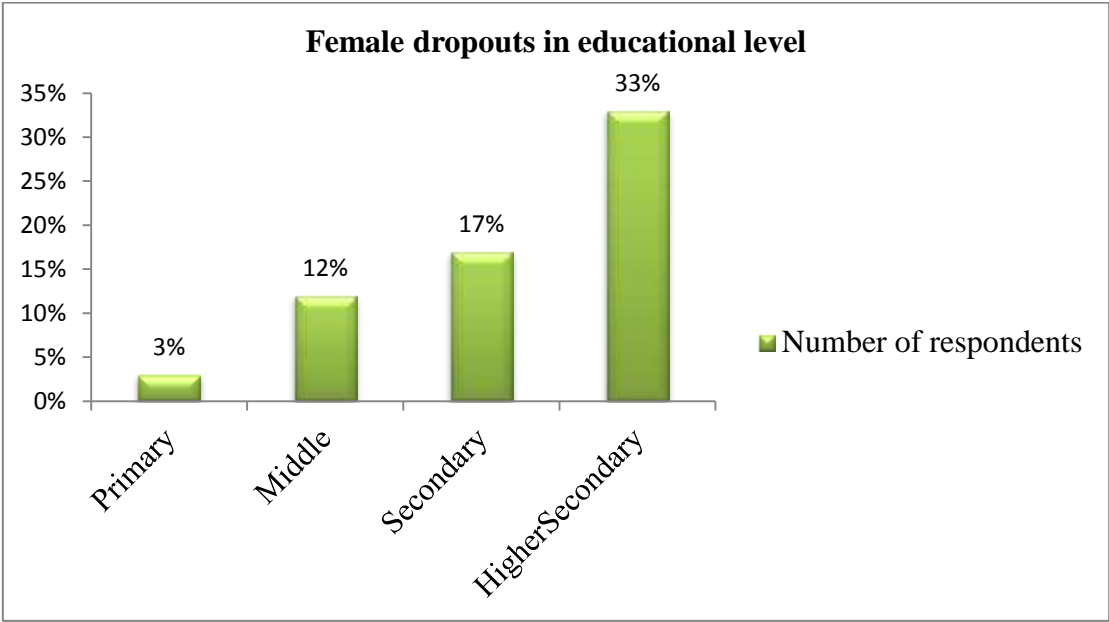
Table 1 shows the classification based on female educational levels in Madurai district. It is observed that half of the total populations have gone upto secondary level of education. I found that from primary level of education up to secondary education was learnt by half of the total population. Most of the tribal areas have not been developed and so there are no educational facilities. This would result in low standard of living. There are no female tribes who were pursuing their higher secondary education due to lack of awareness in education system and also female tribes were forced to getting married earlier.

**Table 2: Classification based on Female Scheduled Tribes' Dropouts**

Educational Level	Total Female Scheduled Tribes Population	No of Dropouts	Share (In Percentage)
Primary	441	15	3.00
Middle	311	37	12.00
Secondary	199	34	17.00
Higher Secondary	184	60	33.00

*Source: Census Report 2011*

**Figure 1: Classification based on Female Scheduled Tribes’ Dropouts**



*Source: Census Report 2011*

The Figure 1 shows the classification based on female scheduled tribes’ dropouts in Madurai district. The dropout rate of females was lesser in primary education (3 percent) as compared to Middle level of education (12 percent). It means that the girl students went to school at primary level as they receive free education with meals. It is to be noted that since their attainment of puberty 12 percent of the girl students were left out at middle level of education. It was found that girl’s dropout is very high at higher secondary level (33 percent) due to several reasons like early marriage, lack of hostel facilities, lack of safety for girls, unavailability of school and lack of interest in subjects as their parents are uneducated. Hence, it is inferred that the enrolment rate of girl students is decreasing as they come to higher education.

**Discussion**

In the present study, the researcher identified dropout rates of women tribes in Madurai among different educational levels based on secondary data obtained from Census of India Report, 2011. The percentage and tabulation method was used for statistical analysis of data. In another similar study of Kumari (2018) on tribal women reported that about 10 million girl students are not going for school due to several reasons like poverty, lack of schools in the tribal areas and lack of educational policies. Likewise, the study related to tribal women conducted by Brahmanandam and Bosu 2016 gave suggestions that government policies should also link scheduled tribes education with their culture. Finally, this leads to reducing

the dropout rates of girl students in future. Hence, the school should provide quality education to them including healthcare. Another study was done among tribal women in Haryana by Rana & Rani in 2015. The main aim of this study was to identify their dropout rates in various levels of education. The results showed that some girls were forced by their parents to go for illegal works to generate income for their families. They were economically backward and also school being very far away from their home was another cause of their dropouts. Similarly, a study conducted by Sandhya Rani, Rajini and Neeraja in 2011 suggested that government should provide skill developing programme for tribal women to get empowered. The cause may be the tribal women are from economically socially backward communities. Hence, the educational access would promote their high standard of living in future. Education is the base for women empowerment.

### **Suggestions**

The following are the measures may be suggested to overcome the tribal women's problems.

- a) The proper motivation and awareness should be created among the tribal parents. By providing counseling, they should send their daughters to school for pursuing their studies. It would improve the standard of living among tribal population in future.
- b) The government should appoint some tribal women as teachers. That would help in making them feel confident and self-motivated which would further encourage tribal population to get enrolled in the various educational levels. Thus, they would not be discriminated among others in the society.
- c) The government and NGO have to take steps in teaching the tribal literature at school level for both tribal and non-tribal students. This would help in decreasing the scarcity of teachers in tribal regions and also enhancing the proper understanding of tribal culture.
- d) The government should maintain the adequate educational centers and research centers in tribal areas. This would lead to improving the proper understanding of tribal history. And it would also help in preventing the dropouts from the educational institutions.
- e) Since very less amount of tribes is enrolled in higher education, the government should encourage the tribal girls via providing Scheduled tribes scholarship for their education in various platforms.
- f) In the early stage of education, the government should support the schools in tribal areas for undergoing the medium of instructions via tribe's mother tongue. This would increase the deep learning behavior among tribes.

## **Conclusion**

Education is the essential instrument for the individuals more so in the case of Tribal Women. Furthermore, they can explore more opportunities to increase their wealth and welfare. The reason being, women comprise of nearly half of the population in a country like India, wherein they are important for upbringing of overall economic development. Even though having various governmental policies and schemes for the tribes, they are still lagging and they are facing challenges. Tribal women play a vital role within their region. Hence, empowering them would result in transforming their lives from low standard of living to high skilled jobs and education, which in turn have an effect in developing the entire tribal women community. Also, providing proper educational access, they can eradicate poverty; get wider scope for employment, which will further increase the aspects of political involvement and women tribes' empowerment. This would lead to achieving the overall tribal development.

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