



Unveiling the Educational Path: Exploring Retention Patterns in Primary Education among Schedule Tribe Children, Emphasizing Gender and Educational Zones

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KEYWORDS

Gross Retention Rate,
Gender Disparity,
Retention, Tribal Students

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to determine the retention/retention rate of primary school pupils (I-V) who belong to the “scheduled tribes” (ST). It also aimed to compare these parameters by gender and educational sector. A descriptive survey method was adopted and Ganderbal district (J&K, India) forms the study area. The primary data on these parameters were collected from Chief and zonal education officers. The data was analysed with the help of percentage statistics and visualised with tables, pie charts and bar charts. The study revealed that the overall and GRR of tribal students at primary level was low at 80.49% and 75.87% respectively. In addition, the study revealed notable observations in terms of sex and zonal differences. The GRR of boys was low in contrast to that of girls (overall 75.52%, ST students 67.36%). It is noteworthy that Hariganwan zone had the lowest GRR for both tribal and all students as compared to Kangan, Ganderbal and Tullamulla zones.

Conceptual Background

The United Nations has set Universal Elementary Education (UEE) as a Millennium Development Goal (MDG), but it is also a critical requirement for human well-being. In India, UEE is both a constitutional mandate and a national goal to provide education to all children, especially during compulsory education (6-14 years). Universalization of primary education (UPE), i.e. the provision of free compulsory education for children aged 6-10 years, is a must before further levels of education can be achieved. UPE is measured by the enrollment of children in Grade 1 and their retention until the end of Grade V. There are three challenges in achieving UEE. The first is to enrol children in school, the second is to ensure that they stay in the education system and the third is to ensure that they learn something meaningful during their stay. India has significantly improved children’s access to school, which is reflected in higher enrollment rates at the primary level. The success in primary school enrollment in India is largely due to the many initiatives that have been taken to improve access to education across the country. Some of the measures taken to increase enrollment rates include DPEP 1994, SSA 2000-01, residential schools, KGBV, MDMS, scholarships, free uniforms and textbooks, RTE 2009 and non-formal education (Akhtar, 2016). In rural areas and places with a large underprivileged population, these programmes and initiatives have led to an increase in school enrollment. The benefits of the programme are greatest for the most vulnerable members of society.

A long-standing problem is keeping students in their schools until they graduate. One way to

measure the effectiveness of educational initiatives is to assess the proportion of students who not only start but also successfully complete their academic journey, rather than dropping out halfway. India's retention rate in school is a major problem for the country's education system. In 2016-17, eighty-seven percent of Indian students reached Class V, compared to their enrollment four years earlier (2012-13), and 13% had either dropped out of school or were repeaters. In 2015-16, 6.35 percent of Indian elementary school students, or 8.20 million, dropped out of school before completing grades 1 to 3, and most of them were tribal. The GER of tribal students in India was 103.2 in 2014-15 and 7.98% of them dropped out of school before grade 5 (ESAG, 2016; Mehta, 2019). This is worrying because it means that more adults will be illiterate as fewer children have the opportunity to learn the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic before entering the next grade and the workforce.

Education plays a crucial role in empowering individuals and promoting social and economic development. However, inequalities in educational opportunities and outcomes persist, particularly among marginalized communities such as the tribal population. Understanding the enrollment and retention rates of tribal students is critical to identifying opportunities for improvement and developing targeted interventions. This study focuses on the district of Ganderbal, where tribal students face particular challenges in accessing and completing primary education. By examining enrollment, retention, and retention rates, this study sheds light on the educational experiences of tribal students, taking into account gender differences and educational zones. The aim of this article was to examine the retention/retention rates of primary (I-V) students, particularly in government-administered educational institutions. The studies will provide an insight into the educational scenario of the tribals in Ganderbal district and the internal efficiency of the school education department.

Objectives

- To determine the continuity of enrollment and the corresponding retention rate in ST at the primary level. The aim is to understand the extent to which students from indigenous peoples persist in their educational pathway at this crucial stage.
- To conduct a comparative analysis of retention rates of tribal students across gender and education sectors. This objective is to identify potential differences or disparities in retention patterns between male and female tribal students and between different educational zones.

Methodology and Procedure

The descriptive survey method was used for the study. The primary data on enrollment and retention of students were collected from the concerned school boards (district and zone) of Ganderbal district with the help of Information Blank. There are four educational zones in Ganderbal district, namely Ganderbal, Tullamulla, Kangan and Hariganwan. The data was analysed with the help of percentage statistics. The results were visualised using bar charts and tables and were used to illustrate the statistical results. The study was limited to government schools that are administered by the Ministry of Education and provide primary education from grade one to grade four. In this study, the gross retention rate was used as repeaters were not included in the retention rate calculation as there is no detention in the primary school phase. The gross retention rate was calculated by dividing the 2015-16 Grade V enrolment figures by the 2011-12 Grade I enrolment figures and multiplying by one hundred.

Analysis & Interpretation

In the academic year 2015-16, Ganderbal district had an overall retention rate (RR) of 80.49% at the primary level. A closer analysis revealed that the retention rate for male students was 75.52%, while it was higher for female students at 85.44%. This shows that of the original 3261 students (1626 males and 1635 females) in Class I, a total of 2625 students (1228 males and 1397 females) successfully progressed to Class V (fig. 2).

However, when focusing specifically on tribal students, the gross retention rate (GRR) at the primary level is 75.87%. The GRR for male stem students was 67.36%, while it was higher for female stem students at 85.13%. This means that out of the original 1197 tribal students (622 males and 572 females) enrolled four years earlier (2011-12), a total of 906 students (419 males and 487 females) were able to continue their education up to Class V (fig. 3).

This shows that the retention rate of students at primary level was less than 100 percent, both overall and among regular pupils. However, the retention rate of tribal students was low compared to overall students and a difference of 4.97% was found. At the primary level, the retention rate of female students was higher than that of male students and there was a negligible difference (0.31%) between the retention rate of female students and tribal females. There was a large discrepancy of 8.16% between male comprehensive school and tribal school students, with male comprehensive school students being higher than male tribal school students.

In the primary level of Ganderbal district, tribal students constituted a significant proportion of the total number of retained students at 34.51%. This proportion was further divided between boys, who constituted 34.12% of the total number of pupils, and girls, who constituted 34.60% (Table 1).

An examination of the retention shares of tribal students in each educational zone at the primary level reveals a clear pattern (Table 2). In Hariganwan zone, the proportion of tribal students was the highest at 61.46% of the total number of retention. This share was again divided between male tribal students, who made up 60.26% of the pupils, and female tribal students, who made up 62.62% of the retained students. This was closely followed by the Kangan zone where tribal students constituted 43.56% of the total number of retention. Among them, the male tribal students constituted 40.74% while the female tribal students constituted 45.20% of the retained students. In contrast, the Tullamulla zone had a relatively lower share of retained students from tribal families at 8.42%. This distribution was almost evenly split between male and female tribal students, with 8.71% and 8.42% of retention respectively. Finally, the Ganderbal zone had the lowest share of retained tribal students at only 5.31%. Interestingly, however, the distribution between male and female tribal students is different. Male tribal students made up 7.02% of retained students, while female tribal students made up only 4.03% of retained students in this zone.

In the academic year 2015-16, Ganderbal district recorded a Gross Retention Rate (GRR) of 80.49% at primary level with 2625 students (75.52% male and 85.44% female) successfully pursuing their education. Of the four zones, the Ganderbal zone had the highest retention rate with 564 students (83.67% male and 96.69% female) of the total students enrolled, representing a retention rate of 89.80%. Tullamulla zone followed closely behind with a retention rate of 90.38% (91.37% males and 89.34% females), while Kangan zone recorded a retention rate of 78.93% (73.97% males and 83.45% females). However, Hariganwan zone had the lowest GRR of 71.91% (66.37% males and 78.22% females), suggesting that targeted interventions are needed to improve retention rates (Table 3).

Looking specifically at the GRR of tribal students in Ganderbal district, a total of 906 tribal students (67.36% male and 85.13% female) have reached the next level, giving a GRR of 75.87%. Among the zones, Ganderbal zone recorded a retention rate of 83.33% (85% male and 81.25% female students), while Tullamulla zone recorded a retention rate of 82.60% (86.36% male and 79.16% female students). Kangan zone had a higher retention rate of 83.10% (72.01% male and 93.80% female), while Hariganwan zone had the lowest GRR of the four zones at 70.20% (62.43% male and 79.41% female).

An analysis of the primary level shows a difference of 4.97% (8.16% for males and 0.31% for females) between the gross retention rate (GRR) of total students and that of tribal students (fig. 4). In particular, the difference was more pronounced for male students than for their female counterparts.

Looking at the educational zones, the overall gap is highest in Tullamulla with 7.78%, followed by Ganderbal with 6.47%, Kangan with 4.17% and Hariganwan with 1.71%. Among male students, the difference was highest in Tullamulla with 5.01%, followed by Hariganwan with 3.94%, Kangan with 1.96% and Ganderbal with 1.33%. On the other hand, the difference among females was highest in Ganderbal with 15.41%, followed by Kangan with 10.35%, Tullamulla with 10.18% and Hariganwan with 1.19%. It is noteworthy that the gaps were generally higher among female students compared to male students at the primary level, except in Hariganwan zone (fig. 5).

Discussion

The findings of the study are in line with the research studies conducted by Project Approval Board - PAB (2016), Ministry of Tribal Affairs – MOTA (2013-14), Mary (2002), Debi & E (n.d.), Mukherjee (2005), Mehta (n.d.), Govinda & Bandyopadhyay (2010), Sedwal & Kamat (2008) and Govinda & Bandyopadhyay (2008). PAB (2016) in its 31st meeting on February 18, 2016 also pointed out the low retention rate of J&K in elementary school (74.9%) and MOTA (2013-14) also mentioned the problem of low retention of tribal children in school education in its report. Mary (2002) also found that the retention rate of tribal children in primary level is much lower than the retention rate of non-tribal children in Kerala. When comparing the genders, it was found that tribal girls have higher retention rates compared to their male counterparts but have low retention rates compared to girls from non-tribal communities. Debi & E (n.d.) also found that the survival rate of tribal students at the primary level is low (47%) and lower than that of other categories of students (65%). Similarly, Mukherjee (2005) and Bhat & Khan (2023) found that the retention rate in school education is low in the studied states and there are significant differences across social categories, gender, region and level due to poverty, infrastructure problems and child labour.

Mehta (n.d.), while analysing the UDISE data 2013-14, also found that the retention rate at primary level is 80.07, which means that 23% of first grade students are not retained in the school system and that the transition rate of ST from primary to secondary level is low. Govinda & Bandyopadhyay (2010) and Bhat (2016:2017) also found that the retention rate of socially disadvantaged tribal groups is unsatisfactory. A significant proportion (47%) of students in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh drop out of school before the final grade due to persistent poor academic performance till the end of schooling. Sedwal & Kamat (2008) also found that completion rates at primary level are low as 20% of students (at risk/not enrolled) are not retained in school due to poor educational quality and environment, school and teacher shortage. Govinda & Bandyopadhyay (2008) also found that retention rates are higher in the higher grades than for boys. Other reasons for low or unequal retention rates of tribal and non-reserved students include poor economic conditions (Bhat, Khan & Rashid, 2022; Bhat, 2007), humiliation (National commission on SC/ST, 1998), poor access to school (Malik & Bhat, 2006; Bhat & Khan, 2022a), discrimination (PROBE, 1999), declining enrolment (Bhat & Khan, 2022b), parental choices/preferences favouring boys' education (Ramachandran, 2003), domestic, agricultural and manual work (Bhat, 2022), lack of interest in education, teacher absenteeism, negative attitude (Bhat, 2008; Govinda & Bandyopadhyay, 2011), linguistic marginalisation (Bhat & Khan, 2022c), language gap/barrier and indigenous tribal cultural traits (Basu & Chatterjee, 2014), irrelevant and unfamiliar language of tribal community and schooling (Bhat & Khan, 2020), curriculum, pedagogy (Kanungo & Mahapatra, 2004; Bhat & Khan, 2021), existing socio-cultural structures, pastoral lifestyle, early marriage, livestock rearing, nomadism (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014), early marriage (Khatana, 1976; Ahmad, n. d.), traditional social norms, values and practises, daughter's orientation as a housewife (Mohanraj, 2010), poor performance, exposure, intelligence, mental health (Bhat, 2013; Lone & Khan, 2017:2018:2019). Domestic chores such as fetching drinking water, seasonal migration (Malik & Bhat, 2006; Malik, Bhat & Ganai, 2007; Rather & Babu, 2017), migration, tribal community's pessimistic attitude towards children's education, especially girls (Hakak & Ali, 2019), affect girls' academic performance.

Conclusion

In the Ganderbal district, the primary level beckoned with the tantalizing goal of achieving a perfect retention rate. Unfortunately, the overall retention rate was 80.49%, just shy of the coveted 100%. Amidst this educational odyssey, a story of its own unfolded when Gujjar and Bakarwal students announced their own retention rate of 75.87%, forming a parallel narrative. But lo and behold, inequalities emerged like puzzling enigmas in this educational saga. The retention rate of Gujjar and Bakarwal students in Ganderbal stood at 34.51%, with even gender dance playing a role. The retention rates of boys fluctuated and lagged behind that of females, especially among Gujjar and Bakarwal boys who had the lowest retention rate. Our explorations in the different zones of Ganderbal, each with its own character, also unfolded a panorama of zonal inequalities. Amidst this tableau, the Hariganwan zone took on a somber hue as it had the lowest retention rates for both Gujjar and Bakarwal students as well as for the student body as a whole. In contrast, the Kangan, Ganderbal and Tullamulla zones shone a brighter hue and had relatively higher retention rates at the primary level.

In this tapestry of educational endeavors, Ganderbal has woven a complex pattern in which the threads of common aspirations, Gujjar and Bakarwal narratives, gender dynamics and zonal differences intertwine. A story that is still unfolding, with the hope of bridging the gaps and feeding the flames of knowledge for all who tread this path of learning.

Implications & Recommendations

The study has highlighted the main problems in the education of tribal students i.e. low retention and gender, category and area specific differences in retention. This will be of great use to the concerned stakeholders (planners, administrators, managers and other organisations) working for the education and welfare of tribal students in assessing the internal constraints within the school education system as well as the external constraints arising from the geographical, cultural, economic, occupational, individual, psychological and social conditions leading to such problems and ameliorating them.

The differences found in the gross retention rate (GRR) between students from the general population and students from Indigenous populations, as well as between different educational sectors, have significant implications for educational policy makers and practitioners. These findings highlight areas where targeted interventions and strategies can be implemented to address inequities and improve educational outcomes. The research shows that the differences in the CFR between students from the general population and from tribal areas are more pronounced for males than for females. This suggests that targeted efforts need to be made to improve retention rates among tribal male students. Strategies could include mentoring programs, tailored academic support, and addressing specific challenges for male students to ensure their continued engagement and academic success. In addition, there are differences in retention rates across educational zones. Tullamulla had the highest overall gap, followed by Ganderbal, Kangan and Hariganwan. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions at the zonal level to address the specific challenges faced by indigenous students in each area. This could include implementing community engagement initiatives, improving access to quality education and providing additional resources and support to zones with higher retention rates.

The research shows that female students show a greater overall lag compared to male students, except in the Hariganwan zone. This suggests the importance of focusing on the specific barriers and challenges faced by female tribal students, such as gender norms, cultural factors and access to educational opportunities. Implementing initiatives to empower and support female students, including scholarships, mentorship programs, and awareness campaigns, can help close the gaps in student retention and promote gender equality in education. To address the identified gaps, it is important to develop customized interventions that address the unique needs and circumstances of

tribal students in each education zone. This could include comprehensive support systems that include academic assistance, socio-emotional support, parental involvement, and community partnerships. Collaboration with local stakeholders, tribal communities, and educational authorities will be critical to the successful implementation of these interventions. Further research that examines the long-term educational trajectory of tribal students beyond the elementary school years is recommended. This would provide insight into the factors that influence retention rates at subsequent levels of education and help identify additional interventions needed to ensure tribal students' continuity and success in education.

The learning or school experiences of tribal children need to be more interesting and motivating to keep them in school by integrating cultural content, pedagogy, games and sports of these communities into schools. Introduction of community specific effective alternative education strategies to formal education like non-formal education, alternative education, home schooling specifically tailored to their interests, open education and adult education centers to combat parental illiteracy and promote education among the children of the itinerant Gujjars and Bakarwals. Adequate boarding schools on the pattern of Navodaya Vidyalaya's should be established for the children of these communities.

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Figures and Tables

Figure 1- The enrollment of tribal students in Class I for the 2011-12 academic year

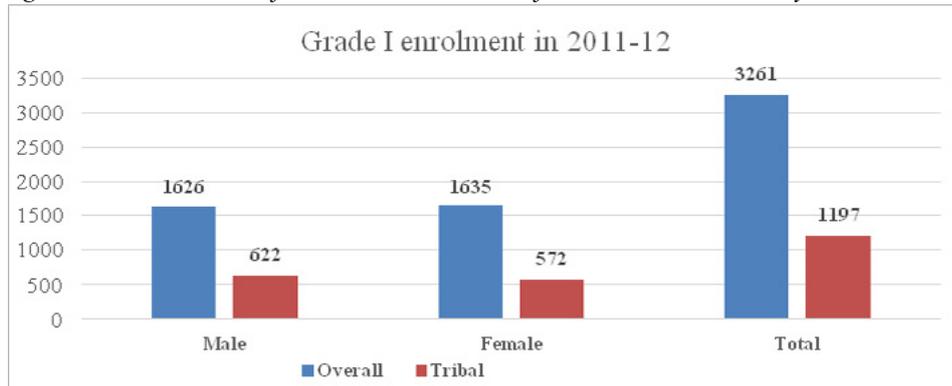


Fig. 2 - Retention of regular students in Class V for the academic year 2015-16.

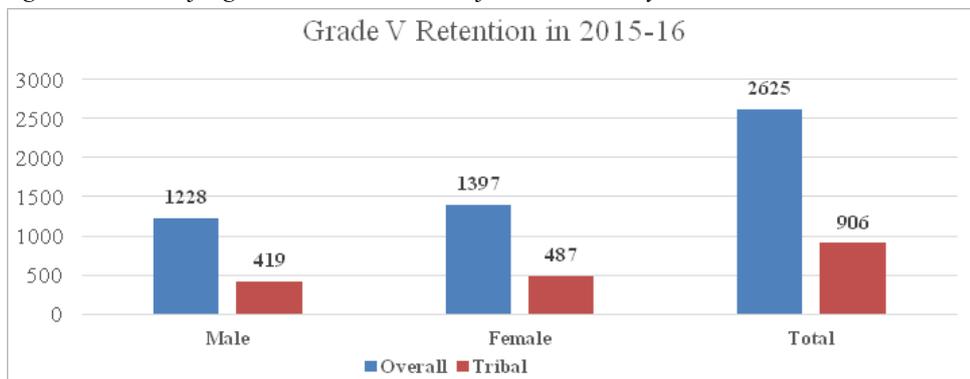


Figure 3 - GRR of tribal students at primary stage.

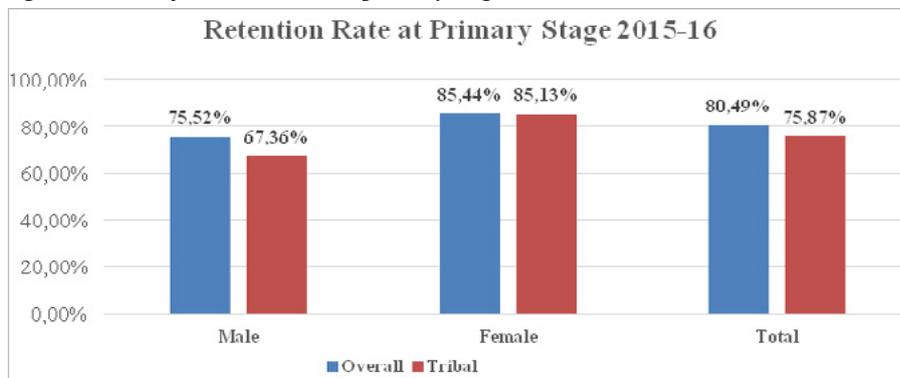


Table 1. showing share of tribal students to the total retention.

District Ganderbal			
Primary (I-V)	M	F	T
	34.12 %	34.60 %	34.51 %

Table 2. showing zone wise shares of tribal students to overall retention in each educational zone at primary stage.

Educational Zones												
Students	ZoneGanderbal			Zone Tullamulla			Zone Kangan			Zone Hariganwan		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
All	242	322	564	233	218	451	378	469	847	375	388	763
Tribals	17	13	30	19	19	38	154	212	369	226	243	469
Share	7.02%	4.03 %	5.31%	8.15 %	8.71%	8.42	40.74%	45.20%	43.56%	60.26%	62.62%	61.46%

Table 3. Retention rate (in percentage) of all students at primary stage to total enrolment in each educational zones.

Educational Zones												
Category	Zone Ganderbal			Zone Tullamulla			Zone Kangan			Zone Hariganwan		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Overall	83.67	96.69	89.80	91.37	89.34	90.38	73.97	83.45	78.93	66.37	78.22	71.91
Tribal	85	81.25	83.33	86.36	79.16	82.60	72.01	93.80	83.10	62.43	79.41	70.20

Figure 4. shows the differences in the GRR at primary level between students from the total population and from tribes.

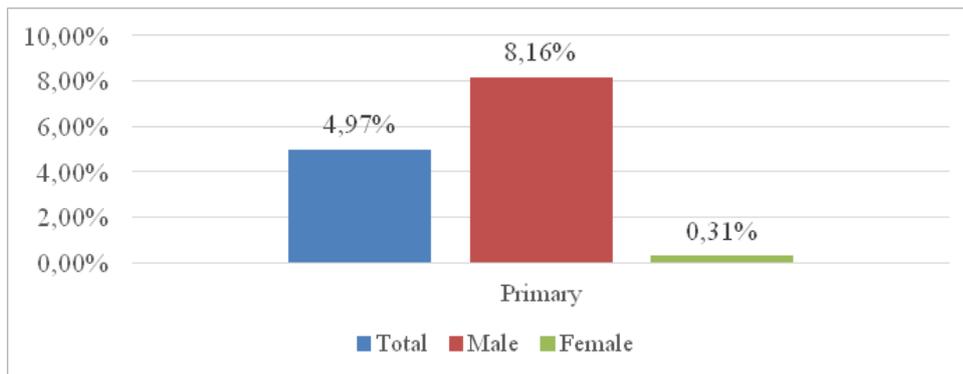


Figure 5. shows the differences in the GRR between the total population and students from indigenous population groups in the individual zones.

