NOLEGEIN Journal of
Human Resource Management & Development

ISSN: 2581-9461
Volume 6, Issue 2, 2023
DOI (Journal): 10.37591/NJHRMD

http://mbajournals.in/index.php/JoHRMD/index

Review NJHRMD

A Study on Tribal Women Participation in Higher Education and Awareness Towards Career Development with Special Reference to Erumad Area–Nilgiris

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the factors influencing tribal women's participation in higher education and their awareness of career development in the Erumad area of Nilgiris. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods, focusing on four main factors: individual, socio-cultural, economic, and security. A sample of 40 tribal women was chosen, and data were gathered using a standardized questionnaire. The findings of the study indicated that individual factors significantly influence women's participation in higher education. Moreover, the study revealed that tribal women are underrepresented in higher education compared to the overall population. Recognizing education as a key driver of development, the study emphasized that education not only contributes to economic progress but also empowers communities at various levels. The study's findings were analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS and AMOS, and several significant recommendations were made based on the results. In conclusion, the study emphasized the importance of addressing environmental and contextual influences to eliminate barriers to women's participation in higher education. Additionally, promoting gender-neutral education was highlighted as crucial for transforming social attitudes and encouraging women to pursue opportunities across all fields, where high-potential activities exist.

Keywords: Tribal women's, education, participation, Awareness, career development

INTRODUCTION

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Received Date: August 16, 2023
Accepted Date: October 21, 2023
Published Date: November01, 2023

Citation: K. Thamarai Selvi, Danya C. Mathai, Sreena S.V.A. A Study on Tribal Women Participation in Higher Education and Awareness Towards Career Development with Special Reference to Erumad Area–Nilgiris. NOLEGEIN Journal of Human Resource Management & Development. 2023; 6(2): 1–7p.

Education plays a crucial role in driving development and is a powerful tool for reducing poverty, improving health, promoting gender equality, and fostering peace and stability. In developing countries, remarkable progress has been accomplished with a large increase in the number of children attending elementary school. Education yields substantial and consistent returns in terms of income and is essential for achieving equity and inclusion. While access to education has improved, as emphasized by the 2018 World Development Report (WDR), learning outcomes are not guaranteed. Education serves as a pathway for upward socioeconomic mobility and is vital for breaking the cycle of poverty. Over the past ten years, there has been a noticeable increase in both educational access and enrollment rates. particularly for women. Still, almost 260 million

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children were born in 2018, which is about one-fifth of the world's population in that age bracket. We hadn't gone to school yet. Furthermore, the majority of kids and teenagers worldwide do not meet the basic proficiency requirements in arithmetic and reading. The COVID-19 pandemic, which spread globally in 2020, led to the temporary closure of schools in most countries, affecting more than 91 percent of students worldwide. Nearly 1.6 billion children and youth would be unable to attend school by April 2020. Furthermore, around 369 million children who relied on school meals were forced to seek alternate nutrition sources on a regular basis. This unprecedented situation resulted in a significant disruption of learning and had a profound impact on the lives of vulnerable and marginalized individuals. The worldwide pandemic's far-reaching effects jeopardize education's hard-earned accomplishment.

Tribal Women Participation and Challenges

Tribal women in communities have recognized the importance of education and its impact on their lives. They aspire to obtain a high-quality education, secure employment opportunities, improve their living conditions, and enhance their overall well-being. However, they face several challenges during their educational journey. One significant problem is the lack of support and assistance from their family members in some cases. Moreover, tribal communities often experience poverty and backwardness, which further compounds the difficulties faced by tribal women in acquiring education and improving their living conditions. However, there have been positive changes in the attitudes of tribal individuals, as they are now encouraging their girls to pursue education. To promote education among tribal women, it is crucial to provide encouragement and make improvements to the overall education system. With advancements, modernization, and globalization, tribal women are making progress and experiencing positive transformations in their lives. They are enrolling in educational institutions and even migrating to urban areas to pursue higher education. After completing their education, they are securing employment opportunities, thus making significant contributions to their career growth. It is widely recognized that when girls and women receive education, they excel in both personal and professional spheres, underscoring the importance and value of education. Education serves as a key driver of women empowerment. But there are certain limitations that need to be addressed. Insufficient development of the education system hampers the ability of girls and women to gain a comprehensive understanding of academic subjects and lesson plans. This, in turn, hinders their ability to effectively apply academic knowledge and engage in satisfactory academic activities.

Statement of the Problem

Most tribal women actively participate in various work activities outside their homes, aiming to earn money for their families. Their work often involves daily labor and agricultural tasks. It is common for young children and girls to accompany their mothers for work. Consequently, regular school attendance becomes challenging, leading to high dropout rates among them. Additionally, poverty-stricken families may hesitate to send their children to school as it would reduce the availability of labor for household chores. The influence of patriarchal norms is evident within many tribal communities, resulting in women handing over their earnings to their husbands, who may frequently spend the money on activities like drinking. Household responsibilities primarily fall upon the female members of the family. Young girls enrolled in primary schools often struggle to acquire a substantial education, both at school and at home.

To address these concerns, the government has implemented legislation requiring free and compulsory education for all children under the age of 14. These initiatives aim to encourage parents to enroll their children in schools, with the belief that proper education can lead to improved conditions. The government provides free school uniforms, books, and midday meals to support these efforts. However, despite these measures, many girls do not consistently continue their education, facing various challenges and obstacles along the way.

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the factors related to women's participation in higher education in Erumad tribal regions.

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- To identify the issues that tribal women encounter in the higher education system.
- To compare the association between women's tribal engagement and demographic characteristics.

Review of Literature

According to Chatterjee's (2014) study, girl children in tribal areas face inconsistent school attendance, often alternating between going to school and staying at home to assist their mothers with household work [8]. This irregularity in school attendance results in forgetting what they have learned. Furthermore, when these girls reach their teenage years, parents often discontinue their education. Calder and Huda (2013) highlight the issue of insufficient and inadequately trained teachers in tribal schools. In indigenous communities, teacher absence poses a serious barrier to educational advancement. Many teachers lack knowledge and understanding of tribal values and language, which hinders their ability to connect with tribal students, leading to student disengagement from education.

Huda (2013) reveals that basic infrastructure facilities are lacking in most tribal schools, such as electricity, water, and proper sanitation facilities, which directly impacts girls' attendance, especially regarding menstrual hygiene. The language barrier also significantly hampers the educational progress of tribal girls, as highlighted by Mahajan (2012). Despite policy documents and constitutional provisions recognizing the importance of primary education in the mother tongue of linguistic minorities (as stated in provision 350A), there is a lack of practical implementation [6]. Even languages spoken by over a million people, such as Santhali, Bhili, Gondi, or Oraon, do not have adequate educational provisions according to Nambissan (2000) [7].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Gathering

The volunteers were chosen at random from Erumad areas. There were forty participants in all for this research.. The participants are able to read the questionnaire under the support of volunteers guiding them and some of them able to read and mark on their own. Prior to data collection, participants were adequately informed of the current study's purpose, and any pertinent information was conveyed.

Statistical Instruments

SPSS version 19.0 was used to organize and analyze the gathered data. To summarize the demographic information as well as the scores for all scales utilized in this study, descriptive statistics were used. In statistical analysis, regression was utilized to investigate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Table 1 Exploratory factor analysis was used to construct the grouping variables, and confirmatory factor analysis and the SEM model were used to corroborate the loaded factors.

Interpretation of the preceding analysis

According to the above table, the majority of women are under the age of 15 years. Moreover, depending on educational qualifications, roughly 25% have never attended a higher education institution. At the same time only 10% were admitted in higher education and nearly 35% were getting education in high schools. Table 2 According to their marital status nearly 70% of the women were married and 57% of the women were engaged with joint family. Table 3 On the basis of number of family members nearly 35% of the women come from five members in family and 40% from more than five members in family. Finally, with regard to monthly income nearly 35% of the women comes from the family of earning less than 4000 in a month and only 10% of the women from above 8000 as their monthly income.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

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Table 1. Profile of demographics

Demographic Variables	Particulars	Frequency	Percent %
Age in Years	Below 15 years	18	45
	16–20 years	13	33
	21–25 years	9	22
	Total	*40*	*100*
Educational qualification	Never been to school	10	25
	Primary	12	30
	High school	14	35
	Hr. Sec school	4	10
	Total	40	100
Marital status	Unmarried	12	30
	Married	28	70
	Total	40	100
Family type	Nuclear	17	43
	Joint	23	57
	Total	40	100
Number of family members	Less than three	3	8
	Four	7	17
	Five	14	35
	More than Five	16	40
	Total	40	100
Monthly income (in Rs)	Less than 4000	14	35
	4001–6000	10	25
	6001–8000	12	30
	Above 8000	4	10
	Total	*40*	*100*

Table 2. Exploratory Factor Analysis for Three main Factors KMO and Bartlett's Test

		Individual Factor	Socio cultural Factor	Economic Factor	Security Factor
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.712	.819	.744	.824
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	701.448	701.448	701.448	701.448
	df	40	40	40	40
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000

Table 3. Rotated Component Matrix for Women Participation

	Component			
	1	***2***	***3***	***4***
	.780	.069	.029	.002
	.658	.020	.170	.112
Individual Factor	.645	.319	.143	.161
Socio cultural Factor	.629	.144	.099.	334
	.561	.428	-.022	.333
	.093	.909	-.034	.088
Economic Factor	.401	.791	.718	.032
	.111	.052	.821	-.152
	.149	-.059	.817	.206
	.374	-.224	-.005	.685
Security Factor	.173	.318	-.006	.670
	.096	.190	.539	.600

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The primary goal of exploratory factor analysis and the component is to determine the link between the variables. and a larger sample size reveals a more reliable association between the variables, whereas a smaller sample size reveals a more moderate relationship between the variables. Both the initial and extraction loadings will be used to construct the concepts of indirect rotation. The initial communalities will depict the variables' interactions with one another. The commonalities, in particular, represent the squared multiple correlation between the variables prior to rotation. It primarily signifies that the starting value of the communalities should be.1 and that only after extraction should it be more than.4 to proceed with the analysis.

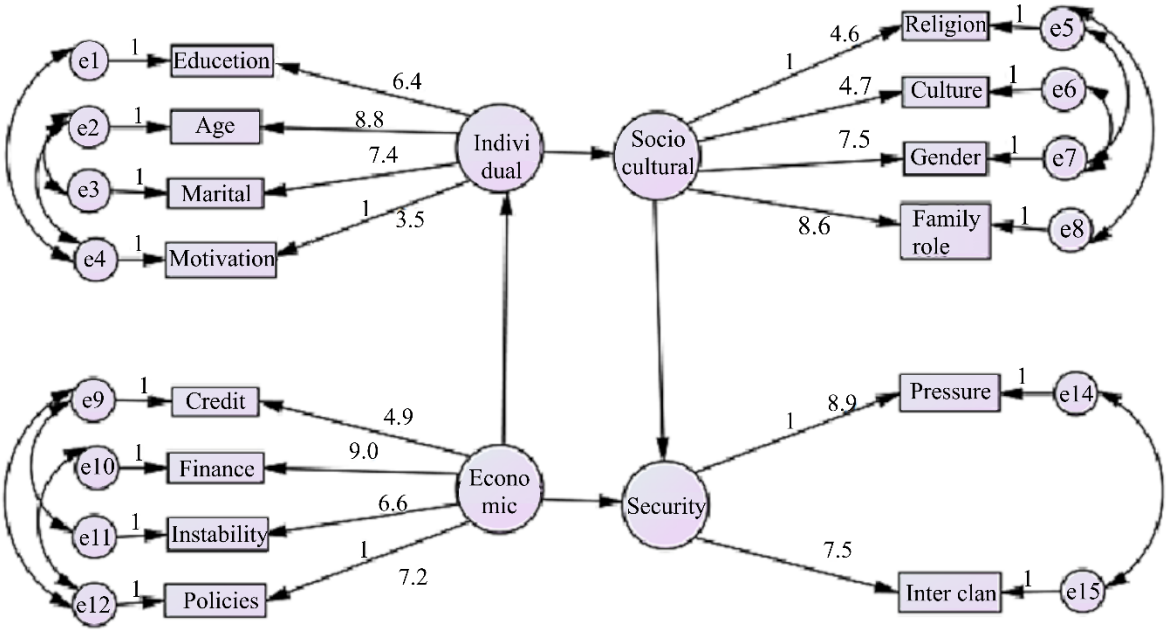

Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Women Participation Model

The Figure 1 chart above clearly shows that as a consequence of confirmatory factor analysis employing SEM analysis, all of the variables' regression values are favorably related to the main factor (women participation). According to the researcher, SEM analysis demonstrates the ideal model fit and is delivered with high factor loadings. Finally, the perfect model fit is determined using model fit indices having quantifiable values, as shown below.

There are numerous reasons for indigenous people's low level of education: Formal education is not regarded as necessary for meeting their societal obligations. Myths and superstitions have a big role in the rejection of education. Table 4 Most tribes are living in poverty. Because they do neither speak or comprehend the language used in schools, tribal girls in India are unable to learn to read. As a result, they are unable to start along the path to empowerment for their own personal development and to exercise their rights in their communities and throughout the wider world [9]. Tribal girls who struggle with reading will be more likely to drop out of school and be unable to finish their education Table 5. The current study has listed some of the problems associated with women tribal in their daily life. EHA-Engagement in Household Activity, ST-Shortage of Teachers, IITLM-Inadequate Teaching-Learning Materials, LAA-Lack of Academic Activities, EM-Early Marriage, CP-Conditions of Poverty [10]

Table 4. Problems that tribal women encounter daily.

Fit statistics	Obtained	Recommended
CMIN/DF	.000	<0.05
GFI	.942	>0.90
AGFI	.904	>0.90

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Fit statistics	Obtained	Recommended
NFI	.883	>0.90
RFI	.882	>0.90
CFI	.958	>0.90
TLI	.936	>0.90
RMSEA	.036	<0.05
RMR	.037	<0.02

Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix for Problems faced by Tribal women's.

	Component							
	1	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***	***6***	***7***	***8***
EHA	.836	.106	.063	.018	-.018	-.111	-.067	-.054
	.704	.117	-.045	.023	-.084	-.059	.307	.056
	.582	.350	.157	.276	.106	.008	-.057	-.012
	.568	.321	-.043	.172	-.103	.012	.142	.129
	.565	.392	.049	.212	.078	-.013	-.157	-.002
	.511	.098	.161	.052	.338	.080	.195	-.346
	.509	.473	.156	.284	.040	-.073	-.139	-.068
ST	.090	.848	.070	-.004	.065	.038	.115	-.025
	.218	.671	.064	.123	.193	-.089	.176	-.074
	.294	.636	-.018	.247	-.036	-.001	.042	.025
	.398	.608	.161	.129	.164	-.023	-.078	-.147
ITLM	-.056	.127	.757	.004	-.054	.201	.116	-.056
	.138	.026	.707	.026	.046	-.210	.085	.009
	-.023	.006	.684	.136	.359	.016	-.140	-.118
	.214	.080	.581	.110	-.111	-.163	.368	.242
LAA	.166	.244	.029	.733	-.090	-.139	-.035	.007
	.099	.065	.000	.713	.178	.038	.161	.066
	.065	.055	.258	.651	.023	.313	.074	-.181
	.368	.360	.001	.487	.674	-.089	.112	.183
EM	-.012	.089	-.082	.041	.791	-.030	.107	.126
	-.009	.155	.353	.003	.581	. 729	-.009	.068
	-.055	-.016	-.098	.061	.056	.835	-.019	-.051
CP	-.079	-.059	.057	-.038	-.095	.665	.763	.445
	.003	.123	.130	.118	.084	-.019	.863	.012
	.236	.059	.333	.210	.264	.001	.416	.765
	.031	-.082	-.014	.036	.220	.110	.015	.814

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite different constitutional restrictions and programs for the tribe's overall population, It is a harsh reality that tribal in general, and tribal women in particular, continue to lag in many areas. Their lack of economic activity, social backwardness, and illiteracy. Poor health conditions necessitate a coordinated tribal development plan. They work very hard and contribute greatly to the family's economic situation, yet they remain poor mostly because no meaningful efforts are directed toward them.

Various programs are implemented during the planning periods for the development of the Scheduled Tribe population, and much progress has been made, but much more remains to be done. Families must have a significant income to be able to get above the poverty line. Because economic status influences

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many elements of life and living conditions, It is quite important. Education is a critical component in tribal development and up liftment.

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