

## TRIBAL STUDENTS AND ONLINE EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

Education plays a key role in raising an individual, developing a person's potential in addition to building the ability to deal with various situations in life. The Government of India provides free and compulsory education to students up to the age of 14 and has enacted the Right to Education Act to improve the status of children. The law includes education as a fundamental right which is compulsory and every citizen of the country is entitled to it. The recent Covid-19 pandemic necessitated a shift to online education which was a major departure from the traditional method of education. In the case of tribal students, they are not ready to accept the big changes that are happening in the field of education and most of them are interested in following the traditional way of education. This can be affected by many reasons, as the devices available for regular program viewing are very limited and different types of obstacles can occur. The online way of education is more useful for students, especially for students who cannot get to school properly, but there are some practical difficulties. The main reason may be ignorance of the teaching method, unavailability of equipment and lack of technical information. This article briefly reviews various issues related to online education for tribal students.

**Keywords:** Tribal students, tribal education, educational barriers, online education.

### **Introduction**

Education plays a key role in raising an individual, developing a person's potential in addition to building the ability to deal with various situations in life. The Government of India provides free and compulsory education to students up to the age of 14 and has enacted the Right to Education

Act to improve the status of children. The law includes education as a fundamental right which is compulsory and every citizen of the country is entitled to it. Mahatma Gandhi defined education as a comprehensive process that cares for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the child. The educational process helped to develop the moral, mental and emotional well-being of the individual. On the other hand, education has been described as the total experience an individual has acquired from birth to death. Education does not begin from the moment a child enters formal institutions such as school, but begins from the home, sibling contact and other circles where the child grows up. The atmosphere at school and the attitude of teachers play an important role in the lives of students and equip them to adapt to the environment of the institution. Educational institutions played an important role in the social and psychological development of the child, because the child spent a lot of time at school in the company of teachers. The attitude of teachers and other staff will have an indelible effect on the student's daily activities. Such support and positive reactions will help them plan their lives in the future as well. Only limited studies have been conducted on the impact of school climate on children's lives, and the results of those conducted suggest that positive support from teachers helps students overcome academic difficulties. Available studies provide different perspectives on school atmosphere. Cohen et al., (2009) believed that the school atmosphere defined the quality and character of the student, which includes school norms, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching practices and organizational structures. It is believed that the school atmosphere affected students' academic performance and their interpersonal relationships with others (Freiberg & Stein, 1999). A comparative study looked at the academic performance of students with a positive and negative school climate and found that students from a school with a positive climate had better academic results than students in a negative school climate (Dwivedi, 2005). Vasalampi et al., (2009) explained that a child's adaptation to school is associated with various aspects such as academic performance, satisfaction at school, involvement in school activities and other social behaviors. Failure to adapt to the school environment can lead to poor academic performance, behavioral problems, and early school leaving. Such a situation would make life more difficult for them than for other people. Most tribal students are unable to adapt to the school environment because they are close to their family and are different from others (Margetts, 2002). The Indian Constitution lists the tribal people as Schedule Tribes to provide them basic support to overcome problems from common people. According to the 2011 census, 10.43 million people in the country belong to the tribal category, which means 8.6% of the total population.

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## Literature review

The study found that 81.3% of students have difficulty following the lessons mainly because they have trouble following the language and content of each lesson. The students had difficulty in following the English teaching and teaching method. These problems have increased over time because teachers are unable to properly address the problems, and 61.3% of student respondents have experienced teachers' negative reactions to their daily studies (Shelly, 2017).

Many studies clearly indicate that the assessment of students' attitudes towards the online learning process is important because it will help to improve the system (Berge, 1997; Rhema & Miliszewska, 2014). Today's society is highly dependent on modern technology and online learning is a viable method to improve the quality of education (Palmer & Holt, 2009). Suthar (2013) found that tribal students are taciturn and introverted by nature because of the difficulties they faced in expressing themselves in common language. Also due to this anomaly, they avoided participating in discussions and other public platforms to express their opinion. According to UNESCO (2006), most developing countries consider online learning as a reflective teaching method and therefore need to have a good proportion of qualified teachers who are proficient in this method of learning. Online education is delivered through various media such as television, computer and mobile phone and is also known by various names and terms such as online learning, visual media learning and m-learning. Online learning is set to change the traditional model of the academic process and introduce modern methods for acquiring new knowledge (Asabere, 2012). Berteau (2009) defines that online learning is an important process and using an online resource provides better understanding through rapid communication. This learning process involves the integration of multiple technologies that are imparted through distance learning. The attitude of the student is the most important aspect in the online educational process, how they dealt with various problems and in addition to their awareness of the use of online media and other computer skills (Athira & Harikrishnan, 2020). Students most preferred mobile learning and trying to learn through a mobile phone. It is an easy process because the wireless network provides easy ways to search for information and work independently in their own time and gather materials or resources in a short time (Al-Fahad, 2009). Another finding proves that the adoption of online learning is gathering information is time-consuming and there are some difficulties (Woo and Reeves, 2007). A study of students who frequently use Web CT related to a Social Work course reveals that the majority of respondents used the learning materials via the Internet and found this to be beneficial to their overall learning experience. The online learning process helped them overcome the difficulty of gathering study materials and reduced the difficulty of achieving their needs. There is a very limited number of studies that attempt to assess the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of students. Paris (2004) conducted a study to assess this domain among 52 students in Australia and

also selected students studying in a public school. The study focused mainly on students' attitude towards the e-learning process and the result showed that students have a better response and positive attitude towards online education programs. The same result was also reached after gender comparison, which meant that all students are ready to follow the online learning process and it helps them to evaluate the system easily. A similar result emerged in another study conducted among nursing students and their attitudes toward online distance learning programs. A positive attitude has helped to implement programs that are feasible as a new way of learning. Some students have a negative attitude towards online learning due to the unavailability of resources. Some of the reasons identified for this negative attitude are low level of technical knowledge and skills, computer hardware problem, poor study skills, low motivation from family and teachers and inability to work individually (Selim, 2007). Online courses also lead to some kind of psychological problems because there is no close relationship with teachers and friends, so some students experienced feelings of loneliness and stress when attending online courses through the computer. The existing negative environment was also one of the main reasons that influenced students' attitude towards virtual classes.

### **Key issues concerning online education of tribal students**

#### *Required Resources:*

In order to attend lectures online, a student needs an internet enabled device, a good streaming internet connection and electricity to power it. All three are considered luxuries in most Indian villages. Even if a certain zone, such as the sidewalks of state highways, receives an Internet signal, trying to get to a place and join a live class in time is equal to the difficulty of attending a physical school.

#### *First generation students:*

Most children in tribal zones across India are learning for the first time. Their earlier generations did not receive formal education. These children are entering the academic ecosystem for the first time. They are just getting to know the basics of languages, arithmetic and science. For such early buds, the concept of physical education is just being established. The etiquette of the teacher-student relationship, gaiety in the classroom, peer interaction, and the creation of childhood memories are just the beginning. Learning from a mobile or computer screen via webinar is like modern-day wizardry for these newbies.

Transitioning from physical to online school is relatively easy for urban children as they have educated parents who are aware of the technical know-how as compared to village dwellers. Even if urban children are inattentive or have trouble grasping during online lectures, parents can help them later with books and references, which is unlikely for a child in a tribal zone.

#### *Learning materials:*

The curriculum already in place makes little to no sense to these forest dwellers who speak Gond and Bihu or any other tribal language. The education system fails to understand the socio-economic difference between Indian cities and Indian villages. Hence, most of the learning materials available online or offline are common languages.

*Huge dropout rate:*

Dropouts due to the financial crisis have been and continue to be persistent in rural schools. Now it's all the more out of control because of COVID-19. Proper medical facilities and vaccination programs are lacking. Survival in the tribal zones depends on the daily wages they get after toiling in manual occupations. The closures have been brutal and where daily food is the main concern, educating their youngsters is not a priority.

*Role of teachers:*

Good teachers are essential to the foundation of discipline, learning and excellence in students' lives. Physical education teachers are scarce in schools across rural India. Although the online form of education has opened channels for teachers to connect with students, few teachers can understand the daily struggles of these rural children. 5.8% of all primary schools and 30.8% of upper primary schools had physical education teachers available, according to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2018. This figure may not have seen any significant increase post-Covid-19.

**Conclusion**

Going forward, online education for tribal students will be a key movement in the upliftment of the entire community. The Right to Education Act 2010 has enabled many unheard of remote places to tread the path of education. In 2020, the first cohort of students who benefited from this law completed ten years. Much has changed since the introduction of the law. Government and institutional initiatives have achieved significant milestones in their efforts to provide education to rural children in India. There is no doubt that there is endless room for improvisation, and online education may be just the boost we need to stand our ground as an equally educated nation. In the case of tribal students, they are not ready to accept the big changes that are happening in the field of education and most of them are interested in following the traditional way of education. This can be affected by many reasons, as the devices available for regular viewing of programs are very limited and different types of obstacles may appear. The online way of education is more useful for students, especially for students who cannot get to school properly, but there are some practical difficulties. The cause may primarily be ignorance of the teaching method, unavailability of equipment and lack of technical information.

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