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## **A study on dropout of tribal students at secondary level in Hooghly district, West Bengal**

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### **Abstract**

The present study examines dropout issue among tribal students at secondary level in Hooghly District of West Bengal. A qualitative survey method was adopted wherein 8 schools from 2 blocks (randomly) of Hooghly district were selected as sample. School records, questionnaire and interview schedule were used to examine the dropout rate, male-female comparison and factors affecting dropout. The study found that dropout rate has been increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16 among tribal students at secondary level. It is also found that the percentage of boys who had dropped out is more than that of girls among tribal students. A qualitative analysis of interview data revealed that major factors associated with dropout are poor economic condition, lack of conducive learning environment at home, attitude of parents towards schooling, lack of aspiration and attitude of non-tribal students towards tribal students.

**Keywords:** dropout, tribal students, Hooghly, qualitative survey, factors associated

### **Introduction**

In the context of modernisation and globalisation, importance of education cannot be neglected as it is the most singular and important means for building human capabilities - the essential and individual powers to reflect, make choices, seek a voice in the society and improve personal endowments. Hence education serves as one of the most powerful instruments known for reducing poverty and inequality and for laying the basis for sustained economic growth. Especially school education during the 14-16 years of age raises the capacity of people to perform their social, economic, political and other functions efficiently. If we need to develop and compare ourselves in the race for development in the world we will have to begin from secondary education in terms of quantity, quality and equity.

The Scheduled Tribe population represents one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized groups in India. With a population of more than 10.2crores, India has the single largest tribal population in the world. This constitutes 8.6 percent of the total population of the country (Census of India, 2011). Education is in fact, an input not only for economic development of tribes but also for inner strength of the tribal communities which helps them in meeting the new challenges of life. It is time that we recognize the rising levels of democratic consciousness and social aspirations among the young people particularly from the deprived sections of society, for a greater share in nation's political, social and techno-economic life. Another reason to entreat for Universal Secondary Education is related to the issue of equality and social justice as enshrined in the Constitution. As per CAGE report (2005) [13, 18] on Universalizing Secondary Education, such a crucial policy for benefiting the Dalits and tribal cannot benefit the majority of these historically exploited sections of the society. This is because a large majority of children and youth belonging to SC and ST community do not have access to secondary education; without secondary or senior secondary education, benefits of reservation to SCs/STs will remain elusive. In view of this, the Central and the State/UT governments had initiated to implement the agenda of universal secondary education in the first phase by the year 2015 and then to senior secondary education in the second phase by the year 2020. It can be concluded that secondary education will be meaningful only if education reaches to all the sections of the people otherwise it will fail to achieve the target of Universalization of Secondary Education. The inequity in provision is further accentuated as the quality of education provided remains quite unsatisfactory particularly disfavoring the progress of children from disadvantaged groups.

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The tribes form the grass root at the base of our indigenous culture and have certainly registered their contributions no less than any other sections of the society. Many students coming from Tribal community have enrolled their name in elementary education, but could not complete their journey towards secondary education. The National Family and Health Survey and many others have also indicated that the majority of secondary school dropouts belong to the poorest and least developed areas and they are usually from ST/SC communities and backward rural areas.

### **Rationale**

The tribal people are facing multifarious problems that are reflected through their present socio-economic conditions and prevalent social taboos, tensions, conflicts and various other inertias existing within their communities. It has been realized by the Indian Constitution, since her independence that educational development would provide opportunities to the deprived/backward children, so that they could recognize and make the best of their power and potential. They could also play the vital role in the sustainable economic development of the country besides improving their own standard of living. So for this reason the Indian constitution under Article 46 states that The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the SC and ST and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. But even after sixty-eight years of independence there prevails the inequality and injustice amidst the tribal communities of the state as evidenced through their standard of living and lifestyle. They are still living at the bottom of the social ladder. It is highly eventual to bring them into mainstream by providing quality education.

Many researches have been conducted at individual or institute level on dropout rate of students belonging to different communities. Researches have also been conducted on the issue of dropout of tribal students of different states and its associated factors (Balamurugan, 2015) [2]. Though there are several efforts from government on this line, due to various factors, the tribal students who had enrolled in the school are not able to continue their education. The issue is more severe at secondary level. There are various scholars, researchers and experts who have often identified and highlighted the various factors responsible for dropout among the students belonging to different communities. However, more focus studies on them are yet to be undertaken so that the problems of the magnitude of effect of each responsible factor can be more loudly and clearly articulated and the possible solutions might be invented. Review of related literature revealed that there are only a few studies had been conducted on dropout of tribal students of west Bengal and no studies with specific reference to tribal students of Hooghly district though Hooghly is a district having sizable tribal population which covers one-eighth (12.08%) of the total population. The tribal communities of West Bengal comprises mainly 18 groups wherein Santal, Oraon, Munda, Bhumij are prominent in Hooghly district which is the focus of the study. According to SDO reports (2013-14, Hooghly) that 78.09% of tribal students have enrolled their name in elementary level but only 60.03% have completed their secondary education and Gross enrolment ratio of ST boys is more than ST girls in all classes. The literacy rate among the tribal communities of the district (61.9%) is less than the

state (77.08%) although there is a substantial increase in the tribal literacy rate of the district during the last four decades, viz. 33.9% in 1971 Census to 68.64% in 2011 Census.

Further, a consolidated knowledge of the magnitude of the effect of the responsible factors causing large number of child dropout and especially among the tribal communities may help the educational planners, policy makers, educators and other concerned authorities in preparing and planning the effective policy to universalize secondary education and to empower the tribal children to compete with their non-tribal counterparts/contenders in the society at large. So the investigators perceive the study to be quite significant as it is high time to study the magnitude or extent of the effect of some responsible factors on the tribal child dropout of the district and to make secondary education available to one and all with quality and equity for ensuring sustainable development among themselves and across the district as well.

### **Statement of problem**

In the present study, the investigator tries to make an attempt to examine the issue of dropout and to identify the magnitude of effect of some responsible factors on the tribal students drop out in the age group of 14-16 years in the secondary schools of the Hooghly district and the problem has been stated as: "A study on Dropout of Tribal Students at Secondary Level in Hooghly District, West Bengal."

### **Objectives**

1. To study the dropout rate of tribal students at secondary level of Hooghly district.
2. To compare the dropout rate between boys and girls belonging to tribal communities at secondary level of Hooghly district.
3. To identify the factors associated with dropout among tribal students at secondary level of Hooghly district.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the dropout rate of tribal students at secondary level in the last 2 academic years?
2. Is there any difference in the dropout rate between boys and girls belonging to the tribal communities at secondary level of Hooghly district?
3. What are the factors associated with the problem of dropout among tribal students at secondary level of Hooghly district?

### **Methodology**

A qualitative research approach was followed wherein descriptive survey method was adopted to explore the problem of dropout among tribal students in Hooghly district of West Bengal. The population of the study was dropout students belonging to tribal community and their parents and teachers of Hooghly district. Multi-stage sampling strategy has been adopted for the present study. There are 18 blocks in Hooghly district out of which 2 blocks has been selected purposively considering the density of the tribal population. From each block, 5 (Arambagh) & 3 (Khanakul) secondary schools have been selected randomly. 21 teachers, 10 dropout students and their parents constituted the sample.

### **Analysis of dropout rate among tribal students**

Data collected using different tools and techniques are represented and analysed

**Dropout rate of Tribal students**

| Name of Block             | Name of School                  | Total no. of students |         | Total no. of Tribal students enrolled at secondary level |         | Total no. of Tribal students' dropout |         | Dropout rate (%) |         |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|--|---------|---------------------------------------|---------|------------------|---------|
|                           |                                 | 2014-15               | 2015-16 | 2014-15  | 2015-16 | 2014-15                               | 2015-16 | 2014-15          | 2015-16 |
| <b>Block-1 (Arambagh)</b> | Year                            |                       |         |  |         |                                       |         |                  |         |
|                           | Ramkrishna Sikhshaniketan       | 561                   | 553     | 41   | 38      | 03                                    | 04      | 7.31             | 10.52   |
|                           | Yeasin mondal Sikhshaniketan    | 419                   | 433     | 36   | 37      | 06                                    | 03      | 16.66            | 8.10    |
|                           | Harit High school               | 575                   | 582     | 48   | 51      | 08                                    | 07      | 16.66            | 13.72   |
|                           | Sugandhya high school           | 482                   | 478     | 49   | 42      | 02                                    | 03      | 4.08             | 7.14    |
| <b>Block-2 (Khanakul)</b> | Vidyabhavan high school         | 568                   | 583     | 49   | 56      | 03                                    | 04      | 6.12             | 7.14    |
|                           | Adarsha Vidyamandir high school | 713                   | 724     | 64   | 69      | 04                                    | 09      | 6.25             | 13.04   |
|                           | Puinan Girls high school        | 626                   | 621     | 59   | 53      | 06                                    | 05      | 10.16            | 9.43    |
|                           | Saratchandra Sikhshaniketan     | 332                   | 319     | 29   | 26      | 04                                    | 05      | 13.79            | 19.23   |
| Total/Average             |                                 | 4276                  | 4293    | 375  | 372     | 36                                    | 40      | 9.6              | 10.75   |

The table no.-3 reveals that 4276 students are enrolled (2014-15) in 8 schools of different blocks in Hooghly district and this number increased into 4293 in the year 2015-16. However, enrolment among tribal students has been decreased from 375 to 372 during the period. The table indicates that number of dropouts has been increased among tribal students. It is evident from increase in dropout rate of tribal students from 9.6% to 10.75%.

**Comparison between dropout rate of boys and girls belonging to tribal communities:  
Comparison between dropout rate of boys and girls**

| Name of school                  | Dropouts student (2013-16) |      | Dropout rate (%) |       |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|------|------------------|-------|
|                                 | Girls                      | Boys | Girls            | Boys  |
| Ramkrishna Sikhsha nicketan     | 03                         | 04   | 42.86            | 57.14 |
| Yeasin mondal sikhsha nicketan  | 03                         | 06   | 33.33            | 66.67 |
| Harit high school               | 07                         | 08   | 46.66            | 53.33 |
| Sugandhya high school           | 03                         | 02   | 60               | 40    |
| Vidyabhavan high school         | 03                         | 04   | 42.86            | 57.14 |
| Adarsha vidyamandir high school | 04                         | 09   | 30.76            | 69.23 |
| Puinan girls high school        | 04                         | 07   | 36.36            | 63.64 |
| Saratchandra sikhsha nicketan   | 04                         | 05   | 44.44            | 55.56 |
| Total                           | 31                         | 45   | 40.79            | 59.21 |

Table: 2 indicates the comparison on dropout rate between boys and girls. It also indicates that dropout rate among boys (59.21%) is higher than that of girls' dropout (40.79%) among tribal students. It is found that boys' dropout rate is higher than that of girls' dropout in all schools except in Sugandhya high school where 60% girls are dropouts while 40% are boys.

**Factors Associated with Dropout of Tribal students**

The research studied 10 tribal students who are recently drop outs from the district and their class division ranges from 9 to 10. They belong to the traditional tribal community. The questions were asked to both the parents of the dropouts and their teachers. They indicate some reasonable issues that lead to the early drop out.

**Opinion of Teachers**

The investigator has met 21 teachers from schools of Arambagh & Khanakul blocks of Hooghly district.

According to teachers view-“dropout in school education is a global problem and it is more in rural or undeveloped/under-developed areas of a society.” All the teachers opined that the most important cause of dropout among the tribal rural students at secondary stage is the socio-economic background (Low family income, poverty).

**Opinion of dropout students**

The investigator has also met the dropout students to know the reasons behind their dropouts. Out of 10 dropout students 35% have blame for the low infrastructural facilities in the school. Where 55% have blamed on their poor socio-economic conditions and inadequate learning. And rest of the 10% students have blamed their low school adjustment.

**Opinion of Parents**

The investigator has also met the parents of dropout students after reached their home. There were 10 parents the investigator has met. They viewed their different opinion on their children's dropout. Most of the parents have blamed for their children's dropout as their low family income, ill health, lack of earning members and poverty. From the transcripts and coded responses of teachers, dropout students and their parents, the following were identified as the factors for dropout among tribal students.

**Factors for dropout among tribal students:**

- 1) Economic Factors
- 2) Lack of conducive learning environment at home
- 3) Attitude of parents towards schooling
- 4) Low performance of tribal students
- 5) Attitude of non-tribal students towards tribal students

These factors are discussed in detail in the following sections and is diagrammatically represented below.

**Factors affecting Dropout**

**1) Economic Factors**

The economic factors which are associated with dropout are discussed under two subsections-poverty and early family responsibility.

**1. Poverty**

Most of the tribal people are living in below poverty level; it is not easy for most of them to send their children to school and still manage their living. Sometimes they do not have any other option than sending their children for work to

manage day to day family expenses. The case of Laxmi, a drop out is described below as an example which shows poverty as one of the major factors contributing to dropout among tribal students.

Laxmi dropped out from Adarsha vidyamandir co-ed school, Jagatpur, in the middle of Grade IX when she was 15 years old. She decided to drop out because she was not able to pay her school fees. She neither had the uniform nor the school shoes. She was not able to purchase all the text books because of lack of money. After dropping out from the school, she started working as a housemaid in three households.

## 2. Early responsibility

Early responsibility is one of the factors for dropout among tribal students. Many a times, tribal family consists of many children. Because of economic difficulties, both parents go for work. Hence taking care of siblings becomes the responsibility of elder children. In such cases, tribal children do not have any option other than leaving the school. The case becomes more severe when it is a single parent family such as the situation of Bikash, a dropout.

Bikash, a drop out from 9th standard was an example of shouldering the family responsibility at an early stage. He discontinued from education when his father died. His only brother is paralyzed and his mother is sick. He wanted to continue his education but his family responsibility does not allow him. There are many drop outs having same reasons in the colonies.

## 2) Lack of conducive learning environment at home

### 1. Family atmosphere

Surroundings or environment is one of the important factors that influence the development of a person, particularly in educational development. Most of the tribal parents are farmers and labours; they have a little knowledge relating to modern world and modern environment. Many of the tribal parents of dropouts are addicted to alcoholic and tobacco items that create mental and economic problems to them. This unhealthy family atmosphere affects the children to a greater extent and this leads to their poor performance in the class which finally results in their dropouts from school.

### 2. Lack of facilities at home

Dropout students opined that they do not get any academic support from family as many of their parents are illiterates. Moreover, no separate room for studying is available hence concentration to study gets lapsed. Minimum facilities such as table, chair etc. are also not available at home and it creates less interest to do either homework or prepare lessons at home.

### 3) Attitude towards schooling

Interview analysis revealed that dropouts and their parents of the dropouts are having negative attitude towards education. They consider education as a boring process. They still are not aware of the need of education for their livelihood. The negative attitude towards education makes them stay back to their colony surroundings than going to school. Out of 09 respondents 44% students expressed that they are not motivated so they always like be with their parents/friends and keep themselves engaged in other activities.

## 4) Community Related Factors

### 1. Influence of Friends

In addition to families and schools, communities and friends may influence students' withdrawal from school. Many of the dropouts and their parents admitted that peer group influence is one of the reason for their decision to leave schooling. They were influenced by their friends who stopped education. So they also put a full stop to education.

## 5) School Related Factors

### 1. Low Performance

Many of the dropout also accused for their low performance as one of the reasons for leaving the school. They feel pressurised when score low in comparison to other students. Gradually, they lose interest in studies when they failed to compete in examinations. Due to this pressure, they lose confidence and their performance is further declined. Ultimately they find difficulty to cope up with studies and leave the school.

### 2. Lack of Resources in School

Many of the educational facilities are not available at school. It is also observed that no sufficient lab facilities, classrooms, toilets, library are available at school. Thus school authorities also find difficulty to retain students because of less facilities at school.

## Major findings of the study

1. The dropout rate has been increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16 among tribal students at secondary level.
2. Percentage of boys who had dropped out is more than that of girls among tribal students.
3. The major factors associated with dropout are poor economic condition, lack of conducive learning environment at home and school, attitude of parents towards schooling and low aspiration
4. 54% tribal students was dropped out because of lack of facilities at school as opined by them.

## Discussion

The study found that the tribal students of the district possess low level of aspiration but some of them tend to be dropped out due to their low school adjustment ability. But the tribal non-dropout children also possess the same (low) level of aspiration and continuing their study, it may be because of their better educational adjustment than the dropout students or any other reason. The causes of low aspiration among the tribal students of the district may be due to their prolonged socio-cultural deprivation and less exposure to the cultural ethos of modernity as Gould (1939) found out that cultural pressure to a great extent is responsible for improving the level of aspiration of an individual. Knowledge of performance of other groups may have effect on goal oriented behaviour or level of aspiration of the individual. Further, the socio-economic status of the family like social background, family background, education level of the parents, profession of the parents, physical resources (property) of the family, monthly income etc. have an effect on the dropout student in general and tribal students in particular. Several studies have been conducted on these variables and findings of most of them support the present study. The relatively more notable among them are. All these studies support the present research findings that the socio-economic status of the

family the child comes from affects success and failure of schooling. The socio-economic status of the parent / family is a main determinant of school adjustment as supported by. All these study supported the present research that, the socio-economic status of the family has a significant effect on student-dropout. However the tribal dropout students are largely influenced by their socio-economic status with low level of aspiration and school adjustment ability.

Another factor which has been studied earlier concluded that poor and inadequate facilities in school institutions were responsible for dropout among the children. This is supported by. These studies have shown that institutional facilities largely affect the learners' retention or dropping out of school.

The present study also find out that there is a large number of dropout cases found in non-tribal schools even if these schools are better in institutional facilities than tribal schools. The most possible reasons for this are-

(i) The poor socio-economic condition and less school adjustment abilities of the dropout children than the non-dropout children of the same school.

(ii) These categories of dropout children are found mostly in the schools of rural areas.

(iii) The schools which are located in rural areas are more prone to inadequateness in various facilities than the schools located in urban and semi urban areas.

Further, in case of tribal dropout on the basis of gender difference, the tribal girls showed better in school adjustment than boys' counterpart. There is no difference has been seen in socio-economic status of their parents. The findings supported by. Study conducted by, also confirm the present study that the girls are more adjusted than the boys in dealing with emotional and social situations of the school. The socio-economic status of the boys and girls tribal dropout do not differ as both the sexes belong to the same socio-cultural background. This finding has been supported by sizable studies on dropout researches in the past decades. Notable among these are Okumu.

### Conclusion

Dropping out is not simply a result of academic failure, but rather often results from both social and academic problems. These problems are influenced by a lack of support and resources in families, schools, and communities. These for reducing dropout rates will require comprehensive approaches both to help at-risk students address the social and academic problems that they face in their lives and to improve the at-risk settings that contribute to these problems.

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