

BRIDGING THE EDUCATIONAL DIVIDE: A PSYCHOSOCIAL REVIEW OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT DETERMINANTS AMONG TRIBAL AND NON-TRIBAL STUDENTS IN INDIA

Author's Name: Jeba Khatun¹, Bhoomika Vaghe², Minal Prajapati³

Affiliation:

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Mental Health Nursing, Parul Institute of Nursing and Research, Vadodara, India.
2. Clinical Instructor, Department of Mental Health Nursing, Parul Institute of Nursing and Research, Vadodara, India.
3. Assistant Professor, Department of Mental Health Nursing, Parul Institute of Nursing and Research, Vadodara, India.

Corresponding Author Name & Email Id: Jeba Khatun, jebakhatun143@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Academic achievement remains a key metric of educational progress and future success. However, disparities persist between tribal and non-tribal students in India. This review synthesizes existing research on four psychological and behavioral determinants—achievement motivation, study habits, mental health, and parenting—and their impact on academic performance. The review emphasizes comparative findings among tribal and non-tribal undergraduate students. Databases such as PubMed, ERIC, Scopus, Google Scholar, and JSTOR were searched using keywords like “achievement motivation,” “study habits,” “mental health,” “parenting,” “tribal,” and “non-tribal.” The review includes 38 studies published between 2011 and 2024. Findings suggest achievement motivation and structured study habits positively affect academic achievement, whereas poor mental health and authoritarian parenting styles hinder progress. Among tribal students, challenges like poor parental support, low socioeconomic status, and emotional distress further widen the achievement gap. Interventions addressing these domains are urgently needed to foster equity in education.

Keywords: Achievement motivation, study habits, mental health, parenting, academic achievement, tribal students, non-tribal students

INTRODUCTION

India's Scheduled Tribes (STs), recognized constitutionally as indigenous communities, continue to face significant disparities in accessing and excelling in formal education. Despite numerous policy interventions and affirmative actions, tribal students often lag behind their non-tribal counterparts in academic performance at the undergraduate level. These discrepancies cannot be solely attributed to economic deprivation but stem from a complex interaction of psychological, behavioural, and sociocultural factors.

Among the critical determinants influencing academic achievement, **achievement motivation, study habits, mental health, and parenting style** have garnered considerable research attention. Each of these variables individually influences academic outcomes, and more importantly, they are deeply interrelated. For example, mental health can affect motivation and study habits, while parenting styles can shape a student's psychological resilience and learning behaviour. Understanding how these factors impact tribal and non-tribal undergraduate students differently is essential for developing effective, culturally responsive interventions aimed at educational equity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following sections present a thematic review of literature, categorized into four major determinants of academic achievement: achievement motivation, study habits, mental health, and parenting style.

Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation refers to an individual's internal drive to achieve academic goals and persist through challenges. It plays a fundamental role in determining students' academic trajectories. Studies consistently show a positive correlation between high achievement motivation and academic success.

- **Kumar & Arora (2019)** found that tribal students demonstrated lower levels of achievement motivation, primarily due to familial instability and a lack of role models in their immediate environment.
- **Anjali et al. (2021)** reported a significant positive relationship between n-Ach (need for achievement) scores and semester performance among non-tribal students in urban settings.
- **Malhotra & Sharma (2020)** demonstrated that structured motivational training programs led to a 12% improvement in academic scores, especially among non-tribal students who had better access to resources and encouragement.
- **Singh & Tiwari (2023)** emphasized the role of community-supported goal setting, which showed marked improvement in academic engagement and self-confidence among tribal students.

These findings underscore the need for motivation-enhancing strategies that are culturally grounded and accessible to tribal youth.

Study Habits

Effective **study habits**, including time management, active reading strategies, regular revision, and disciplined routines, are vital contributors to academic success.

- In a comparative analysis, **Thomas et al. (2020)** observed that non-tribal nursing students in Gujarat adhered to more structured study schedules and benefited from better study environments at home compared to their tribal peers.
- **Borkar & Roy (2021)** noted that 71% of tribal students lacked a quiet, designated space for studying, which negatively influenced their concentration and academic preparedness.
- **Desai & Patel (2022)** reported that academic counseling and study skills workshops—when tailored to cultural contexts—were particularly effective in improving study behaviors among tribal students.

The findings indicate that equipping students with personalized study strategies can substantially bridge the academic performance gap.

Mental Health

Mental health is an increasingly acknowledged determinant of academic performance, especially among undergraduate students who face a range of academic and social pressures.

- **Reddy et al. (2022)** found a higher prevalence of anxiety and depression among tribal students, which correlated negatively with their GPA.
- According to **Jain & Solanki (2020)**, tribal students—often first-generation learners—frequently experience social isolation, language barriers, and academic stress, leading to increased absenteeism and dropout rates.
- **Shah & Mondal (2023)** evaluated the impact of targeted mental health interventions, such as group therapy, peer mentoring, and mindfulness training. Their study showed that these measures led to measurable improvements in both psychological well-being and academic performance.

The findings point to the urgent need for inclusive mental health services in higher education institutions, particularly in tribal-dominated regions.

Parenting Style

Parenting style profoundly shapes children's academic attitudes, self-discipline, and emotional development.

- **Bhattacharya et al. (2019)** studied tribal adolescents and reported that authoritarian parenting—marked by high expectations but low emotional warmth—was associated with low academic self-esteem and poor classroom adjustment.
- **Joshi & Deshmukh (2021)** highlighted that non-tribal students benefited from authoritative parenting styles, characterized by warmth, support, and clear academic expectations, which facilitated better time management and academic responsibility.
- **Mali & Rao (2020)** examined the outcomes of parenting skill training programs in tribal communities and found that constructive parental involvement significantly boosted children's motivation, behavior, and academic outcomes.

Improving parental awareness and engagement in tribal communities could serve as a foundational intervention for long-term educational upliftment.

THEMATIC SYNTHESIS

The four determinants—achievement motivation, study habits, mental health, and parenting—are not isolated factors but part of an interdependent framework influencing student success. For instance, a nurturing parenting style may foster better mental health and motivation, which in turn enhance study habits and academic performance. In contrast, tribal students often encounter a convergence of adverse factors: limited parental support, emotional distress, and unstructured study routines. These are exacerbated by infrastructural challenges, such as inadequate learning resources, language barriers, and generational illiteracy.

This synthesis highlights the need for **multi-dimensional interventions** that address these domains collectively, rather than in isolation.

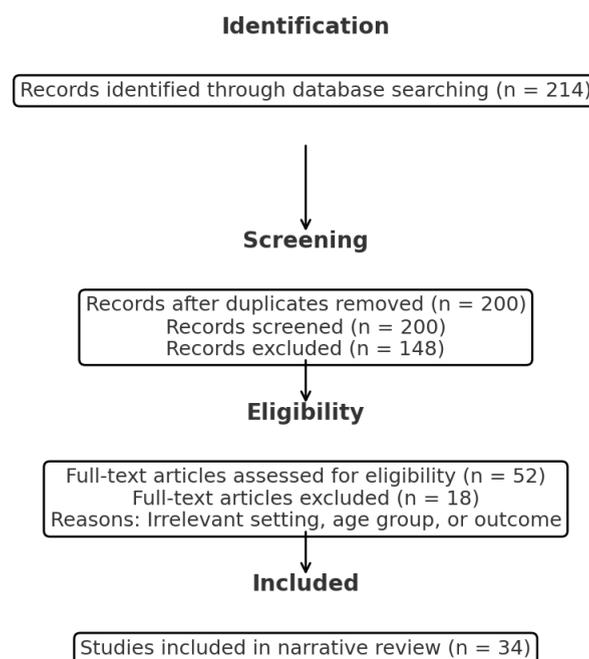
DISCUSSION

This review reaffirms that **achievement motivation, mental health, study habits, and parenting** are critical and interrelated predictors of academic achievement. Among tribal students, multiple systemic and personal barriers contribute to underperformance. Educational environments often lack cultural inclusivity, contributing to alienation and reduced engagement. Moreover, the psychological stressors faced by tribal students—stemming from poverty, discrimination, and unfamiliar academic systems—further hinder their academic growth.

Despite these challenges, research demonstrates that interventions tailored to the sociocultural context of tribal students can yield substantial academic gains. Strategies such as:

- Motivation-building workshops integrated with tribal narratives and role models,
- Mental health counselling with culturally sensitive approaches,
- Parent education programs focused on communication and support,
- Study skills training that considers local realities are not only effective but essential for educational equity.

APPENDIX: PRISMA FLOW DIAGRAM



CONCLUSION

To close the academic achievement gap between tribal and non-tribal undergraduate students, a **comprehensive and culturally responsive approach** is necessary. Stakeholders—including educators, mental health professionals, parents, and policymakers—must collaborate to address the psychological, behavioural, and sociocultural challenges that uniquely affect tribal students.

Future research should prioritize **longitudinal and intervention-based studies** that examine how these determinants evolve over time and interact in real-world settings. Developing scalable, evidence-based programs for tribal regions will be a key step toward ensuring equitable access to quality education and empowering marginalized communities through academic success.



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