

Gender, Equity, and Inclusion: Understanding the Classroom Challenges of Tribal Girls through an Intersectional Lens

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ABSTRACT

Although India has traditionally adhered to the principle of inclusive education, the tribal girls were still being excluded on a systematic basis in classrooms. This paper will focus on the role of gender, linguistic hierarchy, as well as cultural invisibility in their participation, voice, and academic confidence. The study is based on the intersectionality framework by Kimberlé Crenshaw and applies conceptual and policy analysis of the national reports and existing literature critically. The results demonstrate that exclusion acts in the everyday pedagogical life, in the way of curriculum representation, and in the institutional norms but not in the separate socio-economic factors. The study points out that inclusion should go beyond access to recognition and meaningful involvement, and it involves culturally responsive, multilingual, and gender-sensitive practices in pedagogy.

Keywords: Cultural Recognition, Gender Equity, Inclusive Education, Intersectionality, Linguistic Hierarchy, Tribal Girls

INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that education can be the effective tool to resolve historical disparities and facilitate social mobility. The inclusive education has been placed as one of the critical strategies of equity and inclusion to all learners in India however to the many of the tribal communities, especially the tribal girls, such assurance is not evenly exercised in some contexts. Although the policies of access and enrolment into the daily classroom experiences do not stop portraying stratified modes of exclusion that are conditioned by language, gender and cultural belonging. At the national level, the data show that even though enrolment among the Scheduled Tribe (ST) students has increased, there are still wide gaps in terms of retention and secondary level completion (UDISE+, 2024). Tribal girls in particular are hit by the combined effect of socio-economic factors, domestic roles, and language constraint as well as these trends imply that educational inequality cannot be explained with references to resource scarcity alone. Instead, it is incorporated in the manner the classroom is organized in which certain forms of language, knowledge and participation are prioritized over others.

The curricula and pedagogical practices adopted by mainstreams tend to represent the prevalent cultural and linguistic norms, excluding the indigenous knowledge systems (Maharana, 2025). Where tribal girls are constructed by gender and tribality, classroom dynamics are affected by the intersection of hierarchies of legitimacy, and remain silent, visible, and lack academic self-confidence, classroom participation, rather than being considered personal failures, should be understood as the result of institutional processes that dictate who has a voice heard. Despite the available literature on the issues of the dropout rates, poverty, and infrastructure in tribal schooling, much of the literature focuses on gender, tribe, or class independently. These types of single-axis treatments do not reflect the interaction of these dimensions in the daily classroom life. Consequently, the relational and intricate phenomenon of marginalization of tribal girls has not been adequately studied.

To fill this gap, this paper uses the intersectional theory defined by Kimberly Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to understand how gender, language, and culture intersect in classrooms and goes beyond the framework of access conceptualization of inclusion, the paper redefines inclusion as a process of recognition, representation, and meaningful participation. It adds to the already existing body of scholarship by providing a relational interpretation of classroom marginalization by demonstrating how various systems of power interrelate within the daily pedagogical practices. By doing so, the research is able to provide an intersectional approach to inclusive education tying both policy discourse and classroom conditions together and showing the necessity of culturally responsive and gender-sensitive pedagogic change.

In this context, the present study aims to examine how the intersection of gender, language, and cultural identity shapes the classroom experiences and marginalization of tribal girls, and to understand how these overlapping factors influence their participation, voice, and academic confidence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Indians perceive education as means of social mobility and enhancing equality but in the case of most tribal communities and tribal girls in particular, this does not entirely materialize. Although there are constitutional clauses and welfare plans yet inequalities still prevail. According to census data (2011), the rates of literacy of Scheduled Tribe women remain significantly lower than the national average of literacy rates among women and that cannot be attributed to economic reasons alone, but more profound and multi-layered forms of marginalization based on gender, tribal affiliation and socio-economic status. These issues are also raised in government reports as the data provided through UDISE+ (2024) reveal that the enrolment among tribal students has been improved, and there are still critical gaps of retention particularly of tribal students at the secondary level and girls who are tribal are more susceptible. It implies that the mere access to schooling is never guaranteed to result in further involvement and trust in learning, outside of enrolment, the experiences linked to belonging, visibility and voice in the classroom are significant.

The language is one of the determinants of this marginalization, Reddy (2021) notes that the prevalence of dominant regional or state languages in schools tends to marginalize tribal students, whose native languages are not taught in schools, education becomes harder in another language not only in comprehension but also in feeling part of the team. Lal (2005) and Maharana (2025) also add that mainstream curricula tend to ignore the systems of tribal knowledge, and in fact, they consider such knowledge as being less important. This is related to the epistemic injustice concept proposed by Fricker (2007), according to which a person is wronged in a particular regard, that is, his or her ability to know. This, in the classroom settings, indicates that the knowledge and the modes of expression of tribal girl do not always have validity. This underrepresentation may have an impact on the confidence of tribal girls and their sense of belonging. These problems are not exclusive to India, works on Indigenous and minority education in all parts of the world demonstrate the same trends. Battiste (2013) describes how education systems can be biased to favor dominant forms of knowing, which states that the systems of Indigenous knowledge have been left out of the mainstream systems of education. This solidifies the thesis that curriculum and pedagogy is not a neutral construct, but it is structured by power relations that marginalize tribal knowledge and identities in the classroom in a systematic manner. The Tribal Critical Race Theory by Brayboy (2005) demonstrates how schools may hold an unequal power structure that is seemingly neutral, this broader view demonstrates that marginalization of tribal girls is a global trend in the postcolonial and multilingual world.

These challenges are also heightened by gender, research on tribal girl by Jha and Jhingran (2002) and Sujatha (2002) has also revealed that the education of tribal girl is mostly influenced by the household duties, early marriages and the issue of safety. According to the data provided by the National Statistical Office (2019), household work and economic hardship are also listed among the key factors that force girls out of school, but they are conditioned by the gender norms and assumptions that impact mobility, participation, and aspirations. Gender and tribal identity converge, and in that case, educational inequality would have to be interpreted in both access and power and recognition, as the challenges are further complicated (Unterhalter, 2005). India policy frameworks are appreciative of the necessity of inclusion, the National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes multilingual education, gender inclusion, and disadvantaged group equity and reports on residential schools and

tribal student scholarships in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2023) also demonstrate such actions. Those however, turn out to be more numeric such as enrolment and retention and less on what occurs in classes, particularly, aspects on participation, recognition and validation of knowledge.

The current literature on tribal education is significantly dominated by studies of dropout rates, poverty and infrastructure but lots of studies on gender, tribe or class will lack the interaction of these factors in actual classroom contexts. To explain such relationships, intersectionality as proposed by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) can be used. According to scholars such as McCall (2005) and Hancock (2007), intersectionality assists in interpreting complex realities in the social society and the institutional framework and changes the emphasis on the individual disadvantages and highlights how various forms of disadvantages interact.

Although it is a useful concept, there has been little research on how a combination of language, gender, culture, and socio-economic factors is manifested in the daily interaction between girls and the classroom as well as how silence, participation, and identity are constructed, despite the concept of intersectionality having been highly useful, to the research conducted on tribal girl education in India. This paper fills this gap by uniting policy, data and available research using an intersectional lens. It does not focus on individual factors but rather on broader systems of power and redefines the inclusion as recognition, representation, and epistemic justice in the classroom spaces. Through this, it also has a contribution to not only study tribal education in India but general discourse on intersectionality in education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is supported by the idea of intersectionality that was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in the work of Black feminism, Kimberlé Crenshaw created this concept to criticize the methods that focused on one issue (race, gender) at a time. According to the author, intersectionality is a prism, through which you could observe the source and collision of power, its interlacing and intersection (Crenshaw, 2017). This is to bring out the fact that inequalities are not isolated but should be perceived in the context of each other.

She said that the women of color are compoundly marginalized since their identities cannot be comprehended under a single category. Rather, their experiences are combined to influence them in complicated ways depending on such factors as gender, race, class, and other social positions (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality has over the years gained a wider scope of conceptualizing the nature of the work of power in institutions and in society as well. According to scholars such as Carbado et al. (2013), intersectionality is useful in showing how simultaneous systems of power affect the right and resources and reverses the emphasis on individual constraints and puts on institutions as the sources and perpetrators of inequality.

The recent researchers like Atewologun (2018) and Moffitt et al. (2023) also demonstrate that the nature of forming opportunities and social benefits through the collaboration of multiple identities is also possible. Ruiz et al. (2021) say that intersectionality is not an entity concerning identity but reflects on the dynamics of interactions between systems such as patriarchy, colonial past, and language hegemony in daily life. In teaching, this method assists researchers to go beyond mere concepts of diversity, but rather the structural problems in the classroom culture.

Application to the Indian Context:

Intersectionality is a helpful concept in the Indian education scenario to bring the tribal girls into the frame of reference. Their identities are determined by a variety of aspects simultaneously, such as gender, tribal identity, socio-economic background, language. These aspects do not operate individually, rather, they combine in the classroom environment and determine the experience of inclusion and exclusion.

Tribal girls are found to be taught in the classrooms whose teaching practices, curriculum, and assessment systems are such that they assume the dominant cultures and the use of their home languages in teaching is generally not promoted, and their knowledge systems are often disregarded (Reddy, 2021). They also feel influenced by the inability to understand during such situations, as well as by the silence and modesty expectations tied to gender. Intersectionality assists us in the realization that these factors interact. The tribal

issues affecting tribal girls cannot be discussed in terms of gender and cannot be discussed in terms of tribal identity, rather they transpire as a result of these different systems interacting within the larger social and cultural systems favoring dominant groups.

Through the intersectionality, this paper demonstrates that inequalities in the classroom are not individual ability issues. It is participation, voice, and confidence that are created as a result of larger systems that determine whose language, knowledge and expression is privileged.

Justification for the Framework:

Although such approaches as multicultural education and feminist pedagogy can also solve the problems of diversity and gender, they tend to consider them individually. The central themes of multicultural education and feminist pedagogy are cultural representation and gender equality respectively. These methods however do not entirely explain the manner in which various structures of power converge at any given moment to create the daily experiences of tribal girls in classrooms.

Intersectionality also provides a more comprehensive model of this complexity and it allows us to perceive the relationship between language, gender, and culture and the course of their interaction in classroom practices. With the consideration of these factors in combination, it is possible to comprehend more of the marginalization of deeper aspects of marginalization that are not discerned when the aspects are considered individually. Intersectionality is not merely a theory employed as a reference procedure in this study but it functions as an analytical guide and interpretation. It also contributes to bridging the gap between the occurrences in the classroom with broader social and institutional processes. By so doing, it helps in the purpose of the study that is to reconsider inclusive education as a process that entails recognition, representation and voice to all learners.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

This paper employed a qualitative and theoretic methodology of critical conceptual analysis and policy synthesis. Rather than using primary empirical data, it relies on previous studies, national data, and policy publications to analyze the intersection of gender, tribal identity, language, and socio-economic status in the classroom.

The conceptual approach fits the research since it does not intend to quantify patterns, but rather comprehend how structural forms of marginalization work in the context of educational systems. Intersectionality is not only a descriptive concept, but it also serves as an analytical tool to study the institutional practices and classroom processes in which several systems of power are entrenched in each other. Thus, the analysis is aimed at creating more profound interpretive than quantitative generalizations.

Source Identification and Selection:

The sources used in this study were gathered in the library databases like the Scopus-indexed journals and Google Scholar and official government websites. Such keywords as tribal education in India, intersectionality in education, gender and language, classroom participation, Indigenous education, and linguistic marginalization were used. The research was based on peer-reviewed works that were published between 2000 and 2025, as well as policy reports and national reports, including the National Education Policy 2020, reports of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, UDISE+ data, Census of India reports, and publications of the National Statistical Office. Selection of the sources was done according to the area of interest in tribal education, gender and participation, language and curriculum, intersectionality and classroom practices. To remain analytical, sources that were only descriptive or too conceptually shallow were eliminated.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis was conducted in three related steps:

▪ **Conceptual Mapping**

The first stage included the identification of major concepts of intersectionality, epistemic injustice, linguistic hierarchy, gendered participation, and structural marginalization basing on the literature and these concepts formed the theoretical basis of the study.

▪ **Thematic Synthesis**

At the second phase, common themes in policy documents, national reports, and scholarly research were identified into thematic themes, and these comprised examples of linguistic exclusion, curriculum invisibility, gendered participation, socio-economic challenges, and teacher-mediated practices. The process assisted in the arrangement of various sources to logical analytical themes.

▪ **Intersectional Interpretation**

During the last step, these themes were analyzed through intersectional perspective to see how gender, tribal identity, class, and language interplay in classroom settings and the emphasis was placed on how these elements intersect and strengthen one another in influencing participation, recognition and academic confidence. This method would be consistent with qualitative inquiry in which structural insight is more important than statistical quantification.

Reflexive Remarks on the Scope:

This is a conceptual study, which does not purport to be as comprehensive as a systematic review or generalizability of empirical fieldwork. Rather it aims at coming up with a theoretically based interpretation of tribal education structural patterns. The discussion is not indifferent to the variety of tribal societies all over India but does not make generalizations. The study offers a basis to future empirical research by uniting policy discussion, national statistics, and available scholarly literature into a similar analytical framework. These observations can be developed into a deeper study in further research using both classroom observations and ethnography to understand lived experiences.

RESULTS

Language, Power, and Cultural Discontinuity

Language influences silently who feels confident and who does not in most of the classrooms and in the case of tribal girls, schooling usually starts with a language with which they have no relation. Though reports on national level such as UDISE+ (2024) indicate that there is improvement in the enrolment, still, there are still gaps in retention and performance which are covered by the report, and beneath the statistics, there is a mere realization that most tribal students will be expected to learn in a language they are not conversant with.

This is not only to learn lessons, but also to feel that they belong. The identity and knowledge of a child can be less significant when her native language is not used in the classroom. This problem is even more complicated in the light of intersectionality. Not only are tribal girls grappling with a new language, but they are also being pressured by gender and culture to remain silent and modest and in many cases, their reluctance to talk is not caused by inability, rather by a combination of both.

The policy on the National Education 2020 encourages the use of multilingual education, but learning more languages alone is not sufficient since such policies must be put into practice in a manner that also takes into account gender and classroom dynamics. Language is not only a teaching tool but also a means of recognition and appreciation of students.

Gendered Expectations and Classroom participation

Participation, in most classrooms is usually determined by the volume of speaking or the amount of talking in students. But silence can carry more than that when it comes to tribal girls. In the study by Jha and Jhingran (2002) and Sujatha (2002), girls belonging to the marginalized communities are usually brought up in such

environments where the value of modesty, respect and restraint are rewarded and when the culture of these values collide with those of the classroom, there is a mismatch.

Intersectionally, this silence is not a simple issue of being shy, it is a combination of the blended effects of gender, tribalism, classes, and language. Due to this fact, Ruiz et al. (2021) note that in most cases, schools tend to determine the criteria of confidence and merit in accordance with the principles of dominant culture, as their words will be evaluated, not only in accordance with their correctness, but also in accordance with the norms of social life.

To make the idea of inclusion meaningful, the notion of participation must transform and it cannot merely be driven by speaking a lot, but it must also be accompanied by listening attentively, thinking insightfully, collaborating with others, and articulating ideas in a manner that is comfortable and culturally accessible. Once such alternative forms of participation are appreciated, classrooms can become more inclusive and safer environments in which every student is assured of confidence in participating.

Representation of Curriculum and the Issue of Visibility

Education is not just about imparting knowledge and this also reveals who knowledge is significant to. By including tribal histories, languages or even the work of woman in the textbooks in an exceptionally specific way, students are sent a very silent message on what voices are important. The girls of tribes can possibly not see themselves in what they learn, and this impossibility may influence their thoughts about their possibilities and future.

Such invisibility is not accidental, since it is due to historically established systems which prioritize some of the stories over others. When textbooks give most of their attention to mainstream notions of nationhood and progress, indigenous knowledge is assignable to the periphery. This poses a greater problem to tribal girls whose cultural identity is not well represented, not to mention their gender, making them less confident in the learning process.

Inclusion of the curriculum is not simply the concern of including small allusions or token material, it involves making tribal knowledge and women aspects the focus of learning. The symbolic representation should not be viewed in any other form other than meaningful and properly incorporated in the process of education.

Socio-Economic and Structural Inequities

The involvement in education is not only the one that occurs within the classroom, but also the process that occurs outside the classroom. The statistics of the National Statistical Office (2019) indicate that the greatest causes of school dropping by many marginalized girls are financial strains and domesticity. This is a reminder that drop out is not a one-day decision as it is likely the product of persistent stress over time.

In the case of tribal girls these issues are even more complicated, the financial problems are directly connected with demands of household labor. Most girls are forced to juggle between education and taking care of the home or even working. Early marriage also influences their further education in some instances. Even Census data (2011) indicate that literacy levels of Scheduled Tribe women are still lower than the national average also pointing to the ingrained quality of inequalities.

These multi-layered realities are often overlooked when the policies cluster students as a unit; SC/ST girls. The lives of tribal girls are influenced by poverty, gender norms, and cultural marginalization in a combined way. Thus, it takes more than financial aid to combat these issues and demand greater involvement and effort in the community and challenge the limiting social expectations of the role of girls.

Teacher Mediation and Pedagogical Practices

The teachers make a significant contribution to the classroom setting. In some cases, being unconscious, they tend to be guided by expectations about students based on assumptions concerning language, caste and gender.

It might happen that less capable or less interested tribal girls get fewer opportunities to participate, and they are less encouraged to develop.

An intersectional approach can assist us to better see these sublayered processes that tribal girls might fail to fit the idealized description of the student as usually defined, i.e. to know the dominant languages, feel comfortable speaking, and being conversant with the mainstream culture. When they fail to live up to this image, they may easily fade into the background or be less noticeable at the classroom.

Making meaningful change should start with reflection and in this case, teachers must reflect on how their daily routines including how they pose questions or provide feedbacks can inadvertently support inequality. Inclusion is not only about the integration of the students into the classroom but it is also about modifying the classroom so that everybody feels equally supported and appreciated.

Intersectional Synthesis

In all these themes there is a definite trend that the marginalization of the tribal girls is not due to one thing but rather to the combination of language, gender, culture and socio-economic contexts in classroom settings. These forces do not act individually but they support each other and they shape the participation, voice and academic confidence.

Language has an effect on the knowledge that is valued, gender has a tendency on visibility and expression, curriculum impacts on belonging and socio-economic conditions have an effect on continuity in education. All these factors, combined, build classroom settings in which the tribal girls usually exist but are peripheral.

The intersectional approach can be used to alter the emphasis on personal constraints to structural organization since it demonstrates that exclusion is institutionalized in daily life, institutional norms, and power regimes instead of being personalized among the students. These results also shift the meaning of inclusion where it is not merely about access or enrolment but whether it is being recognized, represented and significant in its participation and unless these more profound structural considerations are being addressed, inclusion can still be more about talk than action. These overlapping forces form stratified forms of marginalization in the classroom spaces as illustrated in Figure 1.

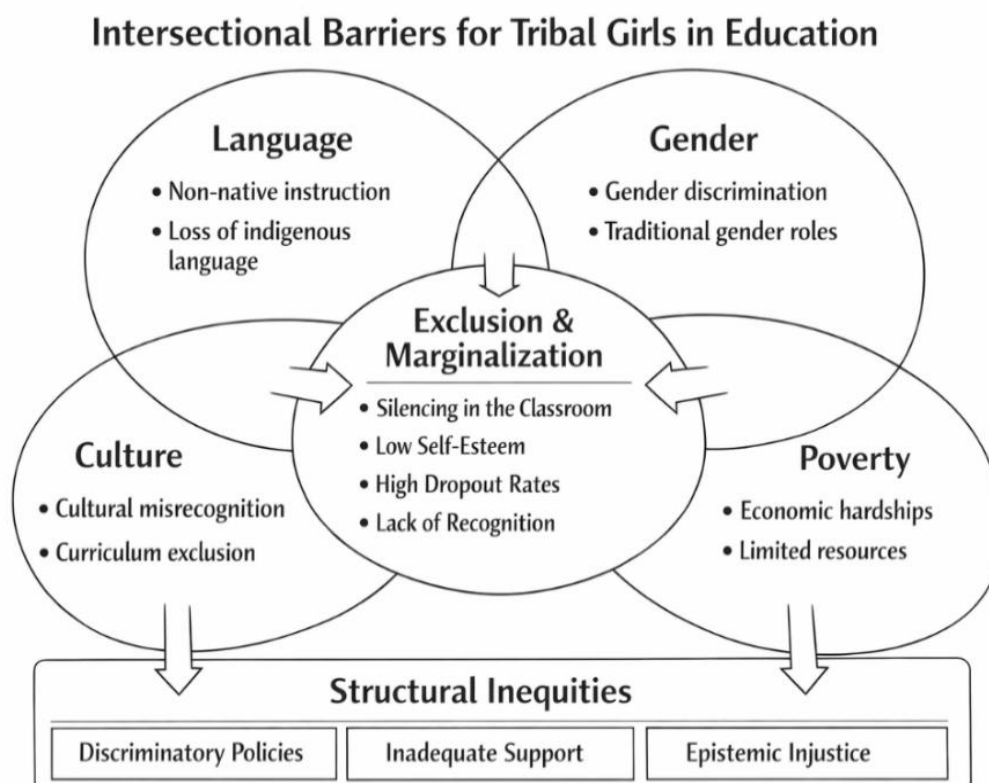


Figure 1. Intersectional barriers shaping classroom marginalization of tribal girls.

Exclusion emerges from the interaction of linguistic hierarchies, gender norms, cultural invisibility, and socio-economic vulnerability.

DISCUSSION

The results of the current research led to the conclusion that inclusion should be reinterpreted in a more profound way in the context of Indian education. Although access, infrastructure and enrolment are the more common priorities of policy frameworks, the analysis here demonstrates that the exclusion remains in more subtle and insidious forms in the daily practices and culture of the classroom. This implies that inclusion cannot be perfectly viewed in terms of policy intentions, but needs to be analyzed in regard to the realities experienced in classroom interactions.

In line with previous studies (Reddy, 2021; Jha and Jhingran, 2002), the study confirms that the barriers to tribal learners, such as language barriers and socio-economic factors are still major limitations to tribal learners. But what this research contribution makes is a relational sense of understanding these barriers as opposed to viewing language, gender, and poverty as independent variables, the results demonstrate how these aspects interrelate and become mutually supportive in the classroom. This changes the discussion of individual disadvantages to the systems of marginalization which are interrelated.

Indicatively, gender norms of modesty and restraint have been attributed to the silence of tribal girls in the classrooms, which is normally perceived as lack of ability (Sujatha, 2002). Nevertheless, this paper proves that this silence needs to be perceived in a broader way. It is not merely gendered expectations, but also linguistic incomprehensiveness, cultural invisibility, and institutional conventions of what is considered to be valid participation. Participation, in that regard, is not a personal characteristic, but a practice that is being shaped socially and determined by power relations.

On the same note, despite the policy interventions, like the National Education Policy 2020, which encourage the idea of multilingual education and equity, the gaps in retention and performance witnessed by UDISE+ show that the changes have not been completely implemented at the classroom level. This underscores a great policy practice gap, in which the intentions of inclusion are not connected to pedagogical facts.

In principle, this research builds out on the use of intersectionality in the Indian education setting. Although intersectionality has been extensively applied in the western setting, the application to the experiences of the tribal girl in the classroom has shown its association to the inequalities of the postcolonial and multilingual environment. The study relates marginalization to intersecting systems of patriarchy, linguistic hierarchies, and cultural dominance which makes it a more contextually grounded contribution to the study of educational inequality.

Notably, the findings also indicate that inclusion cannot be viewed as a settled goal that was reached based on the policy, but rather as a continuous process that needs to be reflected upon and transformed. The meaningful inclusion requires the event of changes at several levels such as classroom interaction, curriculum design, teacher education, and institutional practices. In the absence of such reflexive interaction, inclusion efforts will be symbolic instead of resulting in actual change.

In this regard, the research takes the center stage off of the argument of whether or not tribal girls exist in the classroom and makes them ask how classrooms are organized. It contends that inclusion should not involve modifying student groups towards shared values, but rather involve changing the spaces of education to value diversity in identity, language, modes of knowing and this validates the need to not consider inclusion as a policy end point, but as an ongoing process of institutional change.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research is a conceptual one and relies on the secondary sources in the form of policy documents, national data, and already existing studies. It lacks primary information through classroom observation and interviews and due to this fact, the study might not be a comprehensive reflection of lived experiences of tribal girls on day-to-day setting in particular local circumstances. Since the national reports assist in the comprehension of the

general trends, they are not very representative of the diverse experiences of the various tribal communities. And every area has its cultural, language, and social actuality, which do not necessarily find its representation in secondary data.

Moreover, despite the fact that intersectionality is a powerful theoretical framework used in the study, and its application to the Indian tribal education setting could be the focus of the additional empirical studies. Further research through a fieldwork, classroom observation and first-hand experience with students and teachers will be more grounded.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper explored the interactions between gender, culture, and language to create the classroom experience of the tribal girls in India and here through an intersectional lens, demonstrates that their marginalization cannot be attributed to any one particular factor such as poverty, gender discrimination, and language barriers. Rather, most systems that collaborate in real-life classrooms influence their experiences.

The analysis makes it obvious that exclusion is not an accidental phenomenon but it is embedded into the practices in the classrooms, the curriculum design, and the manner in which the institution functions and what is normalized within these institutions. The language determines who is comfortable with speaking, gender determines who should keep quiet, culture invisibility determines belonging, and financial difficulties determine lack of continuity in education. These are the interrelated elements reinforcing one another, based on which the tribal girls learn and feel themselves. This paper also reveals that inclusion cannot be seen only in terms of access or enrolment as a real inclusion but rather it implies that students feel accepted, honoured and capable of contributing in a significant manner and being in the classroom is not enough when students do not feel appreciated in it.

In order to transition to such inclusion, the research shows that there should be practical changes. The training programs should also incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy and multilingual instruction modules, which are based on tribal contexts. The reforming of the curriculum must not be a mere hasty token introduction of tribal knowledge and ways of knowing into the curriculum, but rather an essential component of learning. Secondly, schools are to establish closer ties to communities by engaging tribal elders and women into the development of educational activities and focus.

Generally, the paper indicates that inequality in education is not only resource but also whose language, culture and knowledge are being valued. Meeting this demand of a revision of the classroom work and standards. However, inclusion is not merely about getting the students into the system, but transforming the system itself, it will only occur when the classrooms are made the place in which tribal girls feel noticed, heard, and respected then education will become meaningful and empowering.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The information of this study is not limited to the experiences of tribal girls and poses significant questions concerning the equity of Indian education in general. The results indicate that marginalization in the classrooms is not by chance and owing to the individual weakness since it is determined by other more profound structures like language practices, curriculum designs, gender norms and institutional expectations.

To begin with, inclusion, as it is discussed in the research, is important to be viewed in a related manner. Such policies that address gender and tribality as two distinct issues are not able to capture the actual experiences of people who live at the intersection. Intersectionality helps us to see that disadvantage is produced by several systems, which overlap each other, and consequently, solutions should be proposed to resolve all layers at the same time.

Second, the research disputes the popular conceptions of engagement and excellence in classrooms. When students are assessed primarily based on their fluency in speaking or their confidence in speaking dominant

languages, a large number of marginalized learners get disproportionately disadvantaged in this context, which in this case means the schools should reconsider the ability, confidence, and meaningful participation.

Third, the results indicate that curriculum and teaching are not neutral that what is and is not covered in textbooks and classroom dialogues indicates power holders. It becomes difficult to believe in the fact that particular forms of knowledge are more significant than others when there are no tribal knowledge, histories, or voices. The education equity should not merely be about access; it should encompass recognition and representation too.

Lastly, the paper recommends that radical change should be critically reflected on by the system itself, unless teachers, schools, and policies are ready to challenge their own assumptions and practices, even the best intentions would continue to perpetuate instead of alleviating inequality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Pedagogical Recommendations

- Integrate culturally responsive teaching strategies that incorporate tribal languages, local knowledge systems, and community narratives into classroom instruction.
- Redefine participation to include multiple forms of engagement, such as collaborative discussion, reflective writing, and community-based learning.
- Encourage teachers to adopt regular reflective practices to examine how their classroom interactions may unintentionally reproduce gendered or cultural hierarchies.
- Create safe dialogic spaces where tribal girls can articulate their experiences without fear of misjudgements or stereotyping.

Policy Recommendations

- Develop intersectionally disaggregated educational data that captures variations within Scheduled Tribe communities, particularly by gender and region.
- Ensure effective implementation of multilingual education policies as outlined in the National Education Policy 2020, with specific attention to classroom-level application.
- Expand scholarship, hostel, and transport support mechanisms for tribal girls to address socio-economic barriers to sustained participation.
- Incorporate qualitative indicators of belonging, voice, and representation into policy evaluation frameworks alongside quantitative enrolment metrics.

Teacher Education Recommendations

- Embed intersectionality and critical pedagogy as core components of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs.
- Include case-based training modules that help teachers identify and respond to classroom micro-dynamics of exclusion.
- Promote recruitment and mentoring of educators from tribal communities to enhance cultural representation within schools.
- Encourage collaborative partnerships between teacher education institutions and tribal communities to ground pedagogy in lived realities.

Disclaimer (Artificial Intelligence)

Author(s) declares that Grammarly, a writing assistance tool, was used to review and enhance the manuscript for grammatical accuracy and clarity.

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