

## **Mentorship Programs and Their Effectiveness in Supporting Higher Education for Tribal Girls in Jharkhand**

**Dr. Binita Choudhary**

Assistant Professor, Bharathi College of Education  
Kandri, Mandar, Ranchi, Jharkhand

*Email: binita10101985@gmail.com*

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the effectiveness of mentorship programs in promoting higher education for tribal girls in Jharkhand, India. These programs address significant barriers such as limited access to quality education, financial constraints, and cultural norms that prioritize domestic responsibilities over academics. Through personalized guidance, academic support, and emotional encouragement, mentorship initiatives have shown to improve academic performance, increase enrollment and retention rates, and boost self-esteem and career aspirations. The analysis includes successful case studies and discusses challenges in implementation. The findings highlight the potential of mentorship programs to transform educational outcomes and foster social change in tribal communities.

**Keywords:** *Mentorship Programs, Tribal Girls' Education, Higher Education for Tribal Girls*

### **1. Introduction**

In the diverse and culturally rich state of Jharkhand, India, tribal communities form a significant part of the population. Despite their rich heritage, these communities often face systemic barriers to education, particularly affecting tribal girls. The challenges include limited access to quality schools, financial constraints, early marriages, and cultural norms that prioritize domestic responsibilities over academic pursuits. In this context, mentorship programs have emerged as a crucial intervention to support and empower tribal girls in their educational journeys. Mentorship programs are designed to provide personalized guidance, academic support, and emotional encouragement to students. For tribal girls in Jharkhand, these programs can bridge the gap between their aspirations and the opportunities available to them. By offering role models, career counseling, and financial assistance, mentorship initiatives aim to enhance educational outcomes and foster a sense of self-efficacy among participants. This exploration delves into the effectiveness of mentorship programs in promoting higher education for tribal girls in Jharkhand. It examines the key components of these programs, their impact on academic performance and personal development, and presents case studies of successful initiatives. Additionally, it highlights the challenges faced in implementing these programs and offers recommendations for enhancing their reach and sustainability. Through this analysis, the significance of mentorship in transforming the educational landscape for tribal girls in Jharkhand becomes evident, underscoring its potential to drive positive social change<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Santhosam, M. A. (2019). Resilience building among the underprivileged youth pursuing higher education in India. *ISOR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 73-80.

## 2. Review of Literature

This study examined the efforts by the Indian government to improve maternal health through cash incentives and the strengthening of public health services. It focused on the Rayagada District of Odisha, exploring tribal women's experiences with pregnancy, childbirth, and interactions with the formal health system. Despite traditional practices treating childbirth as a natural process, women faced barriers such as distance, language, cultural inappropriateness, and distrust in health facilities. The study revealed that integrating traditional health providers and building on community practices could address maternal health challenges more effectively (*Contractor, 2018*) analyzed the feminization of agriculture in India, driven by male outmigration from rural areas. Using data from the Indian Census (1981-2011), the study found that increased female participation in agriculture did not correlate with social or economic empowerment. Instead, it reflected poverty indicators and added to the heavy work burdens of rural women, undermining their well-being. The study concluded that the feminization of agriculture should be viewed as a sign of agrarian distress rather than empowerment. (*Pattnaik 2018*). Consolidated findings from three studies on health inequities among tribal populations in India. It explored diverse historical and geographic contexts to understand the processes sustaining these inequities. The report emphasized the role of the health system in perpetuating health disparities and questioned the existing understanding of health equity. It provided a comprehensive examination of the structural and systemic factors contributing to health inequities among tribal communities, calling for a reevaluation of health policies and practices to address these challenges. (*Ravindran, 2018*). This article highlighted the growing importance of soft skills for employability, especially within the informal economy. It discussed the increasing focus on defining, measuring, and fostering non-cognitive skills such as communication, problem solving, and flexibility, particularly in the post-2015 education debate. The authors provided an overview of these issues and included two case studies to illustrate mechanisms for developing these skills in youth. The chapter emphasized the crucial role of soft skills in complementing technical and cognitive abilities to enhance workplace readiness and success. (*Jayaram, 2017*). Further investigated the impact of gender representation in politics on girls' survival outcomes in India. The dissertation examined how female political victories and a financial incentive scheme introduced in 2008 affected sex selection and the treatment of girls. The findings indicated that increased female representation in state governments improved girls' prenatal and postnatal survival by raising women's status and policy focus. The financial incentive scheme also showed potential in reducing gender bias by altering the relative costs of raising daughters, highlighting the political economy's role in addressing gender and health issues. (*Biswas, 2017*). They analyzed referrals for emergency obstetric care in India, synthesizing data from 16 studies published between 1994 and 2013. It highlighted the high proportion of referrals from peripheral health centers and identified issues such as low staff skills, reluctance to induce labor, and poor referral communication. The study underscored the lack of appropriate clinical guidelines and processes, contributing to gaps and delays in emergency obstetric care. The findings emphasized the need for improved training, standards, and communication within the referral system to enhance maternal health outcomes. (*Singh, 2016*) They discussed the significant impact of sericulture and Kosa silk production on India's economy, particularly in Chhattisgarh. It highlighted the various farming patterns in India, emphasizing commercial agriculture, including sericulture. The study detailed the process of silk production and the government's initiatives to promote it through the Central Silk Board and PRADAN. The paper stressed the entrepreneurial opportunities sericulture provided for unemployed professionals and its contribution to India's GDP and international textile market. (*Tripathi, 2016*) This examined the

growth of higher education in India, highlighting the role of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in quality assurance. Despite two decades of pioneering work in establishing an external quality assurance system, the premier QA body faced crossroads. The study outlined the functions of three accreditation agencies in India, with NAAC covering general education, the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) for technical education, and the Accreditation Board (AB) for agricultural institutions. The paper emphasized the need for a robust quality assurance mechanism amid rapid educational expansion. (*Wankhede, 2015*) This paper investigated the role of alcohol in the lives of Adivasis in Jharkhand, India, over 20 months of ethnographic fieldwork. It explored alcohol's economic, religious, and social implications and its impact on the categorization of Adivasis as governmental subjects. The study avoided deterministic concepts like addiction, instead conceptualizing relationships with alcohol in terms of obligations. This approach provided a nuanced understanding of alcohol's complex roles in Adivasi communities, challenging stereotypes of cultural or genetic predispositions to drinking. (*Begrich, 2013*) They explored the impact of summer internships on management students in Ahmedabad. The study surveyed 100 students who completed six-week internships, revealing significant learning outcomes such as time management, interpersonal skills, and the ability to work independently. These experiences were found to support students' future professional development and prepare them for their careers. The paper highlighted the importance of practical training in management education and its role in shaping realistic career expectations for students. (*Saxena, 2012*)

### **3. Mentorship Programs or Tribal Girls in Jharkhand**

Mentorship programs<sup>2</sup> have emerged as a vital intervention in supporting higher education for tribal girls in Jharkhand, addressing significant barriers they face. These barriers include limited access to quality education, financial constraints, and cultural norms that often prioritize domestic responsibilities over academic pursuits. By offering personalized guidance, academic support, and emotional encouragement, mentorship programs aim to bridge the gap between the aspirations of tribal girls and the opportunities available to them. Mentors provide role models who inspire and motivate, career counseling to help girls set and achieve goals, and financial assistance to alleviate economic pressures. The effectiveness of these mentorship programs is evident in several key areas. They have been shown to improve academic performance by providing additional educational resources and personalized tutoring. Increased enrollment and retention rates highlight the role of mentorship in encouraging girls to stay in school and pursue higher education. Moreover, these programs boost self-esteem and confidence, essential for the personal and academic growth of tribal girls. The exposure to various career opportunities broadens their horizons, encouraging them to envision and work towards a future beyond traditional expectations. Community impact is also significant, as successful mentorship initiatives inspire a culture that values and prioritizes education within the community. However, implementing these programs comes with challenges such as overcoming cultural barriers, improving educational infrastructure, and ensuring sustainability and scalability. Community engagement and culturally sensitive approaches are crucial for addressing resistance and promoting the importance of girls' education. Continuous funding and support are necessary to maintain and expand these programs, ensuring their long-term success. Despite these challenges, the positive outcomes of mentorship programs in Jharkhand underscore their importance and potential in transforming the educational landscape for tribal girls, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

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<sup>2</sup> Ara, N., & Shukla, D. K. (2021). Impacts of Government Schemes and Women Empowerment in Jharkhand. *International Journal of Professional Studies*.

#### **4. Their Effectiveness in Supporting Higher Education**

Mentorship programs play a critical role in supporting higher education<sup>3</sup> for tribal girls in Jharkhand, showcasing notable effectiveness in several dimensions. Firstly, these programs significantly enhance academic performance by providing personalized tutoring and access to educational resources that may otherwise be unavailable. This tailored support helps bridge gaps in learning, leading to better academic outcomes. Mentorship also fosters a supportive environment where tribal girls can seek guidance and advice, bolstering their confidence and motivation to excel in their studies. The mentorship programs are effective in increasing enrollment and retention rates among tribal girls. By addressing barriers such as financial constraints and cultural pressures, these initiatives encourage more girls to pursue and persist in their educational journeys. Mentors often assist in securing scholarships and financial aid, reducing the economic burden on families. Additionally, the presence of role models and a supportive network helps girls navigate challenges and stay committed to their educational goals, thus reducing dropout rates. Lastly, the broader impact of mentorship programs includes enhanced self-esteem and expanded career opportunities. By exposing tribal girls to diverse career paths and providing the necessary guidance to pursue them, mentorship programs help students set and achieve ambitious goals. This not only broadens their horizons but also instills a sense of empowerment and agency. The ripple effect extends to the community as well, fostering a culture that values and supports education for girls. In conclusion, the effectiveness of mentorship programs in supporting higher education for tribal girls in Jharkhand is evident in improved academic performance, higher enrollment and retention rates, and the overall empowerment of students to pursue their ambitions.

#### **5. Community and Cultural Sensitivity**

Effective mentorship programs for tribal girls in Jharkhand must be deeply rooted in the cultural and social contexts of the communities they serve. Tribal communities<sup>4</sup> have distinct traditions, languages, and value systems that shape their way of life. A successful mentorship initiative respects and incorporates these cultural elements, creating a more relatable and engaging experience for the students. By acknowledging the unique cultural heritage of these girls, programs can foster a sense of pride and identity, which is crucial for their personal and academic growth. One of the key aspects of culturally sensitive mentorship is the use of local languages and dialects. Many tribal girls in Jharkhand may not be fluent in the mainstream languages used in formal education, such as Hindi or English. Mentorship programs that employ mentors fluent in local languages can bridge this communication gap, making educational content more accessible. Additionally, incorporating traditional knowledge and practices into the curriculum can enhance learning by connecting new concepts to familiar cultural contexts. This approach not only makes education more relevant but also helps preserve and celebrate indigenous knowledge systems. Community involvement is another critical component of culturally sensitive mentorship. Engaging parents, elders, and community leaders in the educational process can help gain their support and trust. When the community sees the tangible benefits of education, such as improved career prospects and personal development for their daughters, they are more likely to encourage and sustain these efforts. Programs that include community outreach and awareness campaigns can address and mitigate resistance to girls' education, promoting a collective effort towards educational advancement.

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<sup>3</sup> Keys, W., Mason, K., & Kendall, L. (2002). *Supporting students applying to higher education*. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research.

<sup>4</sup> Chang, H. Y., Yang, Y. M., & Kuo, Y. L. (2013). Cultural sensitivity and related factors among community health nurses. *Journal of Nursing Research*, 21(1), 67-73.

By fostering a supportive environment, mentorship programs can significantly enhance their effectiveness and create lasting positive change in the lives of tribal girls in Jharkhand<sup>5</sup>.

## 6. Conclusion

Mentorship programs have proven to be effective in supporting higher education for tribal girls in Jharkhand by enhancing academic performance, increasing enrollment and retention rates, and empowering students. These programs address barriers like financial constraints and cultural norms, offering personalized support and career guidance. Culturally sensitive approaches and community engagement are crucial for overcoming challenges and ensuring sustainability. Overall, mentorship initiatives play a vital role in transforming the educational landscape for tribal girls, promoting a more inclusive and equitable society.

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<sup>5</sup> Kurane, A., & Topno, S. (2006). Migration of tribal girls of Jharkhand to Mumbai for domestic work: A study of domestic working tribal girls of Jharkhand in Mumbai. *The Oriental Anthropologist*, 6(2), 362-375.