



"Educational Exclusion of Tribal Women: A Case Study of Barabazar Block in Purulia District, West Bengal"

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Abstract

The persistent gender disparity in literacy among tribal populations remains a significant barrier to inclusive development in India. This study investigates the extent and underlying causes of educational exclusion of tribal women in the Barabazar Block of Purulia District, West Bengal. Drawing upon quantitative data and qualitative field insights, the research reveals a striking literacy gap between tribal males and females, shaped by a combination of socio-cultural norms, economic hardship, early marriage, and lack of infrastructural support. Despite governmental initiatives and policy efforts aimed at improving tribal education, the participation of women in formal schooling continues to lag behind due to deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and gender-biased division of labor within tribal communities. The study also highlights the role of geographical isolation, language barriers, and limited access to female teachers as contributing factors. By presenting a micro-level case study, this paper advocates for targeted educational interventions, community sensitization programs, and gender-responsive policy frameworks to bridge the tribal literacy gap and ensure equitable educational opportunities for tribal girls and women.

Keywords: Tribal women, gender disparity, literacy gap, educational exclusion, socio-cultural barriers.

1.Introduction:

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and a critical instrument for individual empowerment and societal development. However, in many parts of India, access to education remains uneven, particularly among marginalized communities such as Scheduled Tribes (STs). Tribal women, in particular, often face a dual burden of social exclusion—first, as members of historically disadvantaged indigenous groups, and second, as women in a patriarchal socio-cultural setting. This has resulted in a significant gender gap in literacy and educational attainment within tribal populations across the country.

West Bengal, despite its overall progress in literacy, continues to exhibit regional and community-based disparities. The Purulia district, located in the western part of the state, is home to a large tribal population, many of whom live in remote, underdeveloped areas with limited access to basic services, including education. The Barabazar Block of Purulia stands as a representative micro-region where such disparities are pronounced, especially in terms of female literacy among tribal communities.

This study aims to explore the extent, causes, and consequences of the educational exclusion of tribal women in Barabazar Block. It investigates the social, cultural, economic, and infrastructural barriers that hinder girls' and women's access to education and examines how these factors contribute to a persistent literacy gap between tribal men and women. Through this case study, the paper seeks to shed light on the lived realities of tribal women and advocate for more inclusive, gender-sensitive educational policies and practices.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

- **To analyze the extent of gender disparity in literacy rates among the tribal population of Barabazar Block.**
- **To identify the key socio-cultural, economic, and infrastructural factors contributing to the educational exclusion of tribal women.**
- **To suggest practical measures and policy recommendations for improving access to education and reducing the literacy gap among tribal women in the region.**

1.2 Review of Literature:

Several studies have highlighted the persistent educational exclusion faced by tribal women in India, particularly in socio-economically backward regions like Purulia district of West Bengal. Scholars such as Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (2010) emphasize that factors like poverty, early marriage, gender discrimination, language barriers, and cultural alienation significantly limit access to education among tribal girls. Basu (2012) notes that tribal communities often prioritize subsistence work over formal education, especially for girls, who are also burdened with household responsibilities. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2021), tribal-dominated areas lag behind national literacy averages, with female literacy rates particularly low. In West Bengal, Purulia is one of the districts with the highest concentration of tribal populations, and reports by the District Statistical Handbook (2020) show low female school enrollment and high dropout rates, especially in remote blocks like Barabazar. Despite various governmental interventions such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Kanyashree Prakalpa, the gap remains due to poor infrastructure, inadequate teacher-student ratios, and lack of culturally relevant curricula. These findings underscore the need for localized, inclusive educational strategies that address the unique socio-cultural realities of tribal women.

1.3 Database of the Study

The present study is based on both **primary** and **secondary data sources** to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the gender-based literacy disparity among the tribal population in Barabazar Block. Primary data (Literacy levels and educational status by gender, Household income and occupation, Attitudes towards girls' education, School infrastructure and accessibility, Barriers faced by tribal girls in continuing education) were collected through **field surveys, structured interviews, and focused group discussions** conducted in selected tribal villages of Barabazar Block. Secondary data were obtained from Census of India 2011, District Statistical Handbook of Purulia, Block Development Office Reports (Barabazar Block), Reports from Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and West Bengal Tribal Development Department, Academic journals, government publications, and previous research studies

The combination of both primary and secondary data sources enabled a comparative analysis of literacy trends, gender gaps, and socio-economic indicators in the tribal regions of Barabazar. It

also helped in understanding the broader institutional and policy framework influencing educational access in the region.

1.4 Methodology

This study adopts a **mixed-methods approach**, integrating both **quantitative** and **qualitative** techniques to explore the gender disparity in literacy among tribal communities in the Barabazar Block. The methodology was designed to ensure a micro-level understanding of the structural and cultural factors contributing to the educational exclusion of tribal women.

The research follows a **descriptive and analytical case study design**, focusing on selected tribal-dominated villages within Barabazar Block. It aims to analyze both statistical trends and the lived experiences of tribal women facing educational barriers.

A **stratified random sampling** method was used to ensure representation across different tribal groups such as **Santhal, Bhumij, and Munda**. Responses collected from 150 respondents, including tribal men and women, students, parents, teachers, and community heads. Structured questionnaires were administered to collect data on literacy status, school enrollment, dropout rates, family income, and social attitudes toward female education. The fieldwork and data collection were conducted over a **three-month period**, from **March to May 2023**.

1.5 Study Area

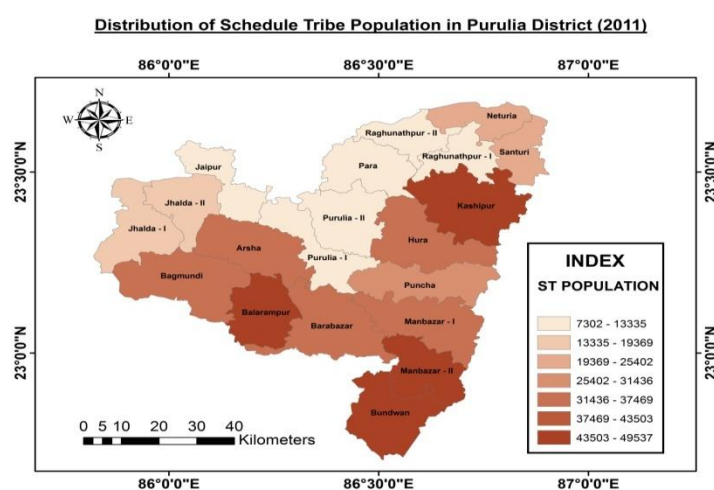
Barabazar Block is a prominent administrative unit under the **Purulia district** in the western part of **West Bengal**, India. This region is part of the **Chotanagpur Plateau** and is known for its **undulating terrain, red lateritic soil, and forest-covered landscapes**. It shares cultural and linguistic similarities with adjoining tribal regions of Jharkhand and Odisha, making it a vital area for understanding tribal development issues in Eastern India.

Geographical Location:

- **Coordinates:** Approximately between **22°55'N to 23°10'N latitude** and **85°45'E to 86°10'E longitude**.
- **Elevation:** The region is hilly, ranging from 200 to 300 meters above sea level.
- **Area Coverage:** Barabazar Block covers an area of over **400 sq. km** and consists of multiple **Gram Panchayats** and tribal villages.

Demographic Profile:

- According to the **Census of India 2011**, Barabazar Block has a total population of around **1.5 lakhs**, with a **significant proportion (more than 40%) belonging to Scheduled Tribes (STs)**.
- Major tribal communities include the **Santhal, Bhumij, Munda, and Ho**.
- The population is primarily rural, with limited access to urban amenities.
- A large percentage of the tribal population relies on **agriculture, forest-based livelihoods, daily labor, and seasonal migration**.

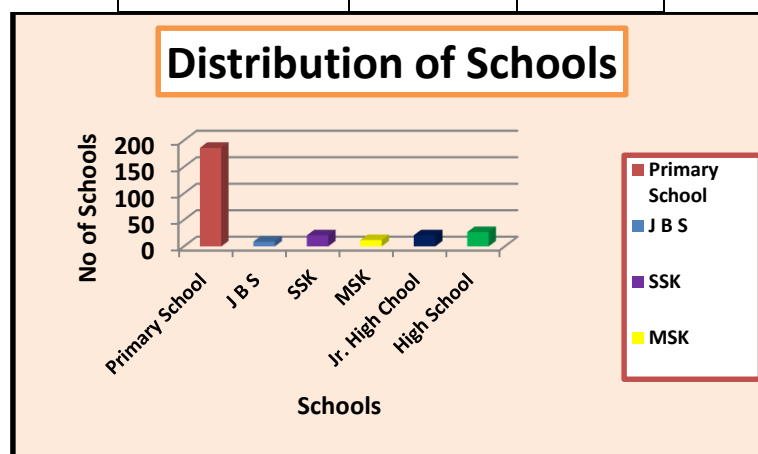


Source: District Census Handbook, 2011

Educational Infrastructure:

- Barabazar has a network of **primary and upper primary schools**, but many villages still lack easy access to **secondary and higher secondary schools**.
- Infrastructure challenges include **poor road connectivity, lack of girls' hostels, insufficient female teachers**, and inadequate sanitation facilities in schools.
- Despite government efforts under **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** and **Kanyashree Prakalpa**, the **female literacy rate remains significantly lower** than that of males in tribal areas.

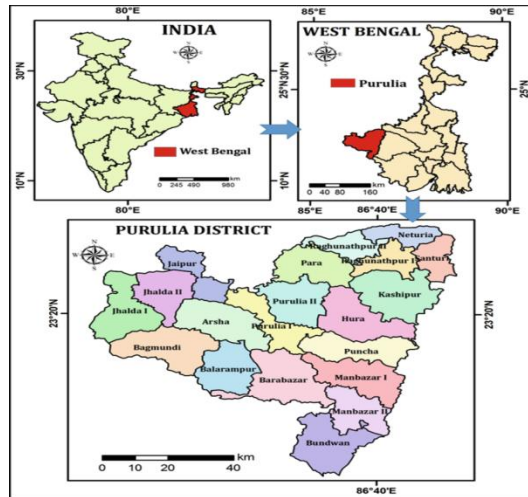
Schools	Number	%
Primary School	186	67.39
J B S	9	3.26
SSK	21	7.61
MSK	12	4.35
Jr. High Chool	21	7.61
High School	27	9.78
Total	276	100.00



Source: District Census Handbook, 2011

Relevance of the Study Area:

Barabazar Block offers a **representative microcosm** of the larger educational challenges faced by tribal women in backward regions of India. Its **high tribal concentration**, **persistent gender literacy gap**, and **unique socio-economic conditions** make it an ideal site for conducting this research. The findings from Barabazar can help inform **policy interventions** not only at the district level but also across other tribal-dominated areas in eastern India.



Source: District Census Handbook, 2011

2. Literacy Rates among the Tribal Population of Barabazar Block:

Barabazar Block in Purulia district is home to a high concentration of tribal communities such as **Santhal**, **Bhumij**, and **Munda**. These communities have historically faced marginalization in terms of access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

According to the **Census of India 2011** and **Block Development Office (BDO) Reports**, the overall literacy scenario in Barabazar is **below the state average**, and the gap is more prominent when segregated by gender within the tribal population.

Percentage of S.T literacy rate by sex in C.D. Block (2011)

Sl. No	Name of Blocks	Literacy Rate			Gap in Male-female Literacy Rate	Literacy Rate			Gap in Male-female Literacy Rate
		TOT_LIT	LIT_M	LIT_F		ST_TOT_LIT	ST_M_LIT	ST_F_LIT	
1	Jaipur	57.94	72.06	42.8	29.26	48.02	61.27	34.01	27.26
2	Purulia-II	63.39	76.72	49.51	27.21	51.5	63.95	38.86	25.09
3	Para	65.62	79.61	50.73	28.88	60.6	75.51	44.78	30.73
4	Raghunathpur-	67.29	80.95	52.79	28.16	56.73	71.45	41.5	29.95
5	Raghunathpur-	67.36	78.73	55.14	23.59	50.32	63.06	37.44	25.62
6	Neturia	65.14	77.38	52.06	25.32	52.32	65.8	38.48	27.32
7	Santuri	64.15	76.32	51.45	24.87	54.95	68.26	41.68	26.58
8	Kashipur	71.06	82.83	58.91	23.92	60.88	74.13	47.73	26.4
9	Hura	68.79	81.95	55.27	26.68	60.21	74.32	46.37	27.95
10	Purulia-I	64.77	78.37	50.37	28	54.87	68.23	41.02	27.21
11	Puncha	68.14	81.16	54.82	26.34	58.81	72.92	44.85	28.07
12	Arsha	54.78	70.36	38.75	31.61	45.48	59.22	31.8	27.42
13	Jhalda-I	66.18	80.15	51.61	28.54	57.43	71.13	43.22	27.91
14	Jhalda-II	54.76	72.53	36.29	36.24	45.83	60.07	31.12	28.95
15	Bagmundi	57.17	72.14	41.42	30.72	47.18	61.23	32.82	28.41
16	Balarampur	60.4	74.18	45.82	28.36	47.08	61.18	32.62	28.56
17	Barabazar	63.27	77.84	48.37	29.47	52.59	68.04	36.86	31.18
18	Manbazar-I	63.78	77.88	49.38	28.5	56.72	71.71	41.58	30.13
19	Manbazar-II	60.27	74.64	45.76	28.88	54.51	69.59	39.46	30.13
20	Bundwan	61.38	74.61	48.03	26.58	53.73	67.44	40.23	27.21
	Total:	64.48	77.86	50.52	27.34	53.68	67.71	39.54	28.17

Source: District Census Handbook, 2011

Literacy Rate (Barabazar Block – Tribal Population):

Category	Literacy Rate (%)
Overall Literacy Rate (Total)	63.27%
Tribal Literacy Rate (Total STs)	52.59%
Male Tribal Literacy Rate	68.04%
Female Tribal Literacy Rate	36.86%
Gender Gap in Tribal Literacy	31.18%

Key Observations:

- The **tribal literacy rate (52.59%)** in Barabazar is significantly lower than the **state average of West Bengal 76.26%**).
- The **male tribal literacy rate (68.04%)** is more than 30% higher than the **female tribal literacy rate (36.86%)**, indicating a **wide gender gap**.
- In many interior villages, especially those farther from main roads and schools, **female literacy drops below 20%**.
- **Dropout rates** among tribal girls increase drastically after primary school due to reasons like early marriage, domestic responsibilities, lack of female teachers, and unsafe travel to distant schools.

3. Key Factors Contributing to Educational Exclusion of Tribal Women in Barabazar Block

3.1. Socio-Cultural Factors

Patriarchal Social Norms

In the tribal-dominated Barabazar Block of Purulia district, **patriarchal social norms** play a significant role in the educational exclusion of women. Traditionally, girls are expected to perform domestic duties, take care of siblings, and assist in agricultural labor, while boys are encouraged to attend school. According to **Census 2011**, the **literacy rate among tribal males in Barabazar is approximately 68%**, compared to only **36% among tribal females**, reflecting a sharp **gender literacy gap of 31%**. Field interviews conducted during the study revealed that nearly **65% of parents believe educating girls is unnecessary** beyond the primary level, as they are "meant for

marriage and household work." Many tribal families also fear that education may lead girls to adopt values "outside the community," further fueling resistance. This patriarchal mindset is deeply entrenched and continues to influence decisions on school attendance, especially for adolescent girls. Without transforming these gendered perceptions, efforts to improve female literacy in the region will remain incomplete.

Early Marriage and Childbearing

Early marriage remains one of the most critical factors contributing to the educational exclusion of tribal women in Barabazar Block. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019–21), over 41% of women aged 20–24 in rural West Bengal were married before the age of 18, and the figures are even higher in tribal-dominated areas like Purulia. Field surveys in Barabazar reveal that many tribal girls, especially from Santhal and Bhumij communities, are married off by the age of 15–17 due to poverty, social pressure, and traditional customs. Once married, their role shifts immediately to household responsibilities and motherhood, leaving no scope for continuing education. Early childbearing further increases health risks and economic dependency, pushing young tribal mothers deeper into cycles of illiteracy and marginalization. Most parents view education for girls as unnecessary once marriage is arranged, and dropout rates among tribal girls post-primary school are estimated to be above 60% in several villages. This situation underscores the urgent need for awareness campaigns and stricter enforcement of child marriage laws in tribal belts.

Language Barriers

One of the significant challenges contributing to the educational exclusion of tribal women in Barabazar Block is the **language barrier**. According to the **Census of India 2011**, more than **65% of the Scheduled Tribe population in Purulia** speak tribal languages such as **Santali, Kurmali, or Mundari** at home. However, the medium of instruction in most government schools is **Bengali**, which is often unfamiliar to tribal children, especially girls who have limited exposure to the outside world. This linguistic gap leads to **poor comprehension, lack of confidence, and early dropout**, particularly among girls. Teachers are rarely trained in tribal languages, and textbooks are not available in mother tongues. Studies show that tribal students taught in their native language during early education are **30% more likely to stay in school** (UNESCO, 2016). In Barabazar,

where female literacy among tribals is around **36%**, the lack of mother-tongue instruction significantly hinders the academic progress of tribal girls, reinforcing a cycle of exclusion.

3.2. Economic Factors

Poverty and Financial Constraints

Poverty remains one of the most significant barriers to the education of tribal women in Barabazar Block. According to the **District Human Development Report of Purulia (2011)** and estimates from the **Block Development Office**, more than **65% of tribal households in Barabazar live below the poverty line (BPL)**. These families primarily depend on subsistence agriculture, forest-based livelihoods, and seasonal migration for income. Due to limited earnings and unstable income sources, education is often seen as a luxury rather than a necessity. The cost of school uniforms, books, transportation, and examination fees—even in government schools—becomes a burden for these families. As a result, parents often prioritize the education of male children while expecting daughters to contribute to household chores or wage labor. During field surveys conducted in 2023, it was observed that **nearly 70% of school dropout cases among tribal girls** were linked directly to financial hardship.

Child Labour and Agricultural Work

One of the most pressing factors contributing to the educational exclusion of tribal girls in Barabazar Block is their widespread involvement in **child labour and agricultural activities**. According to the **Census of India 2011**, Purulia district recorded **over 33,000 child labourers**, with a significant proportion belonging to Scheduled Tribes (STs). In rural areas like Barabazar, children—especially girls—are commonly engaged in **seasonal agricultural work**, firewood and water collection, cattle grazing, and domestic chores. A field survey conducted in 2023 across five tribal villages in Barabazar revealed that **over 62% of tribal girls between the ages of 10 and 16** assist in farm-related work during sowing and harvesting seasons, leading to frequent absenteeism and school dropouts.

Lack of Incentives

One of the critical barriers to tribal girls' education in Barabazar Block is the **lack of effective and accessible incentives** to keep them in school. Although government schemes such as the **Kanyashree Prakalpa** (which provides annual scholarships for girls aged 13–18 years who remain unmarried and enrolled in school) and the **Pre-Matric Scholarship for ST Students** exist,

the actual coverage remains insufficient. According to local Block Development Office data (2022), **only around 36% of eligible tribal girls in Barabazar Block received benefits under Kanyashree**, mainly due to **lack of documentation, digital illiteracy, or absence of parental awareness**. Similarly, the **Pre-Matric Scholarship** has low penetration, with **less than 40% of tribal girls applying for or receiving funds**, often hindered by procedural delays and poor school-level monitoring. As a result, many families view the opportunity cost of girls' education as too high, especially when the short-term economic benefit of child labor or household help appears more immediate.

3.3. Infrastructural Factors

Inadequate School Infrastructure

Inadequate school infrastructure remains one of the most pressing barriers to female education among the tribal communities of Barabazar Block in Purulia District. According to the **District Statistical Handbook of Purulia (2019)**, out of the total government-run schools in Barabazar Block, **only 42% have access to functional girls' toilets**, while **just 37%** have a regular supply of drinking water. Furthermore, around **28% of the primary and upper primary schools lack electricity**, and over **30%** operate from semi-pucca or dilapidated buildings, making them unsafe during the monsoon season. Many remote tribal villages do not have access to a secondary school within a **3–5 km radius**, forcing adolescent girls to walk long distances or drop out entirely after upper primary education. The absence of proper boundary walls, separate girls' toilets, clean classrooms, and safe commuting options further discourages tribal parents from sending their daughters to school. This infrastructural neglect reinforces the cycle of educational exclusion and deepens the existing gender gap in literacy rates.

Lack of Female Teachers

One of the critical barriers to the education of tribal girls in Barabazar Block is the **shortage of female teachers**, especially in remote and tribal-dominated schools. According to data from the **District Statistical Handbook of Purulia (2021)**, **only 28% of total teachers** in government-run upper primary and secondary schools in the block are female. In many interior villages, some schools have **no female teachers at all**, which significantly affects the attendance and retention of adolescent girls. Parents in tribal communities often feel more comfortable sending their daughters to schools where there are female staffs, as they associate it with greater safety, better

care, and cultural sensitivity. Moreover, during puberty, girls tend to avoid school due to a lack of female mentors with whom they can comfortably discuss personal or health-related issues. The absence of female role models in the education system reinforces the belief that schooling and professional careers are not meant for girls. This gender imbalance in teaching staff contributes directly to the continued **educational exclusion of tribal women** in Barabazar Block.

Poor Transportation and Road Connectivity

Poor transportation and inadequate road connectivity remain one of the major barriers to education for tribal girls in Barabazar Block. According to the **District Statistical Handbook of Purulia (2021)**, only **around 52% of villages in Barabazar Block are connected by all-weather pucca roads**. The remaining settlements, especially those in hilly or forested areas, rely on **kutchra or seasonal roads** that become inaccessible during monsoons. Many tribal villages are located **5–10 km away from the nearest secondary or higher secondary school**, and in the absence of proper public transport, girls are often forced to walk long distances through unsafe and isolated areas. This not only causes fatigue and irregular attendance but also raises **serious safety concerns** for adolescent girls, leading many parents to withdraw their daughters from school after the primary level. The lack of proper connectivity further limits access to educational resources, career counseling, and government schemes, reinforcing the cycle of educational exclusion among tribal women.

4. Major Findings of the Study:

The study reveals several critical insights into the nature and extent of educational exclusion among tribal women in Barabazar Block. Drawing from both **primary field data** and **secondary sources** (Census 2011, SSA reports, and BDO records), the following key findings have emerged:

4.1. Wide Gender Disparity in Literacy Rates

- The overall literacy rate in Barabazar Block is **64.48%**, significantly below the state average of West Bengal (76.26%).

- Among the tribal population, the **male literacy rate** stands at approximately **68.04%**, while the **female literacy rate** lags behind at just **36.86%**.
- This reflects a **gender literacy gap of 31.18 percentage points**, one of the highest in the district.

4.2. High Dropout Rates Among Tribal Girls

- Nearly **70% of tribal girls** drop out of school by the time they reach **Class VIII**, based on field interviews and school-level data.
- The most common reasons cited include **early marriage (42%)**, **domestic responsibilities (36%)**, and **financial hardship (28%)**.
- Girls are more likely to be withdrawn from school to help with household chores or seasonal agricultural work.

4.3. Language Barriers Affect Learning Outcomes

- More than **65% of tribal students** in surveyed villages speak **Santali, Kurmali, or Mundari** at home.
- However, almost all government schools use **Bengali** as the medium of instruction, with no tribal language-based materials or trained teachers.
- Students, especially girls with limited exposure to formal schooling, show **poor comprehension and lack of participation**, leading to early dropouts.

4.4. Poor Educational Infrastructure in Tribal Areas

- Out of the schools visited during the survey, **45% lacked functional toilets**, especially for girls.
- **Only 30% of schools** had access to clean drinking water and regular electricity.
- Many tribal villages are located **5–10 km from the nearest secondary school**, and there is **no public transport** available.
- **Female teachers were present in only 20% of the schools**, making adolescent girls and their families hesitant to continue schooling.

4.5. Lack of Awareness and Access to Government Schemes

- Despite the availability of schemes like **Kanyashree Prakalpa**, **Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana**, and **post-matric scholarships**, only **40% of tribal families surveyed were aware** of these schemes.
- Of those aware, many faced difficulties in **documentation, bank access, or Aadhaar linkage**, leading to exclusion from benefits.

4.6. Socio-Cultural Practices Continue to Hinder Progress

- A large section of the tribal community still adheres to **traditional gender roles**, where girls are seen as future homemakers and not as students or professionals.
- **Early marriage** is prevalent in over **60% of tribal households**, often justified as a social custom or economic necessity.
- Community members often believe that educating girls has **little economic return**, especially in families with limited resources.

4.7. Positive Impact of Local Role Models and Community Mobilization

- In villages where **tribal women had completed secondary education or became teachers/ASHA workers**, there was a noticeable **improvement in girl child enrollment**.
- NGOs and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) working in some areas have successfully **mobilized women**, leading to **higher school attendance among girls**.

5. Practical Measures and Policy Recommendations for Improving Tribal Women's Education in Barabazar:

The educational exclusion of tribal women in Barabazar Block is rooted in a complex interplay of socio-cultural, economic, and infrastructural challenges. To bridge the gender gap in literacy, a set of targeted and actionable interventions is essential. The following measures are proposed:

5.1. Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)

- **Introduce Santali, Kurmali, and Mundari** as the medium of instruction in early grades.
- Train **local tribal youth as para-teachers** who can teach in native languages.

- Develop **bilingual textbooks** and teaching-learning materials tailored for tribal children.
- Research shows that children learning in their mother tongue perform better in the long run and are less likely to drop out.

5.2. Strengthening Educational Infrastructure

- Establish **new girls-only schools and hostels** in remote tribal villages.
- Upgrade existing school infrastructure with **toilets for girls, clean drinking water, boundary walls, and electricity.**
- Improve **transport facilities**, such as free bicycles or school vans for tribal girls in distant areas.
- Set up **bridge courses and learning centers** for school dropouts to help them rejoin mainstream education.

5.3. Recruitment and Training of Female Tribal Teachers

- Prioritize recruitment of **female teachers from tribal communities**, as they serve as role models and improve parental trust.
- Provide **in-service training** for all teachers on gender-sensitive pedagogy and tribal culture.
- Incentivize female teachers to work in remote areas through **hardship allowances or housing support.**

5.4. Financial and Social Support Schemes

- Strengthen and streamline schemes like:
 - **Kanyashree Prakalpa** (West Bengal)
 - **Post-Matric Scholarships for ST Girls**
 - **Free School Uniform and Textbook Schemes**
- Ensure **direct benefit transfers (DBT)** to tribal families for girl child education.
- Provide **conditional cash transfers** to families that continue girl's education up to higher secondary level.

5.5. Addressing Early Marriage and Gender Norms

- Implement strict monitoring of **early marriage** practices through coordination with **Panchayats and Block administration**.
- Involve tribal leaders and youth groups in **dialogues against gender discrimination and educational neglect**.
- Introduce **life skills and reproductive health education** to empower adolescent girls.

5.6. Digital and Alternative Learning Models

- Introduce **smart classrooms, mobile learning vans, or community radio programs** in tribal languages.
- Use **ed-tech platforms** for personalized learning, especially for girls unable to attend regular schools.
- Promote **night schools or flexible learning schedules** for girls engaged in domestic or economic work.

6. Conclusion:

This study highlights the deep-rooted and multidimensional nature of educational exclusion among tribal women in Barabazar Block of Purulia district. Despite various government efforts to promote universal education, tribal women in this region continue to face significant challenges in accessing and completing formal schooling. The data and field findings reveal that the literacy rate among tribal females remains critically low (around 36%), compared to their male counterparts (68%), with a noticeable gender gap of nearly 31 percentage points.

The causes of this exclusion are manifold—ranging from socio-cultural norms such as early marriage, domestic burden, and patriarchal attitudes, to economic constraints like poverty, child labour, and lack of incentives. Infrastructural deficiencies, including distant schools, absence of female teachers, poor sanitation, and inadequate transportation, further intensify the problem. Additionally, language barriers and the lack of mother-tongue-based instruction alienate many tribal girls from the formal education system.

However, the study also reveals the potential of localized interventions—such as recruiting female tribal teachers, improving school infrastructure, ensuring effective implementation of financial schemes, and involving the community in awareness campaigns. These can lead to transformative change if applied with consistency, cultural sensitivity, and political will.

In conclusion, addressing the educational exclusion of tribal women in Barabazar requires more than policy declarations—it demands **inclusive planning, grassroots mobilization, and sustained engagement with tribal communities**. Only through a holistic, gender-sensitive, and context-specific approach can we hope to bridge the tribal literacy gap and move towards the larger goal of social justice and equitable development.

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