



Parental Involvement in the Primary Education of Santhal Children in Mayurbhanj District, Odisha

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Abstract

Parental involvement is widely recognized as a crucial factor in children's educational success, particularly at the primary level. However, the nature and extent of such involvement vary significantly across socio-cultural contexts. The present study examines parental involvement in the primary education of Santhal children in Mayurbhanj district. Using a descriptive ethnographic approach, data were collected from 50 Santhal parents of Saria village in Betnoti block through a self-designed checklist questionnaire, unstructured interviews, and observation. Parental involvement was analyzed across two dimensions: home-based involvement and school-based involvement. The findings reveal that overall parental involvement remains low, with fathers demonstrating relatively higher engagement than mothers in both home- and school-related educational activities. Mothers' participation is particularly constrained by low educational attainment, language barriers, lack of self-efficacy, and household responsibilities. The study also identifies lack of time and limited confidence in supporting academic activities as major psychosocial barriers affecting parental involvement. The findings underscore the need for culturally responsive educational strategies that strengthen school-family partnerships and empower tribal parents, especially mothers, to support their children's primary education more effectively.

Keywords: Parental involvement, Santhal tribe, primary education, tribal education, Odisha

1.Introduction

Parental involvement plays a vital role in shaping the educational progress and overall development of children. However, the extent and pattern of such involvement vary widely across different social and cultural groups. In India, tribal communities form a distinct socio-cultural group with unique traditions, language, and ways of life. According to the Census of India (2011), Scheduled Tribes constitute 8.6% of the country's total population. In Odisha, the tribal population is comparatively higher, making up 22.85% of the state's population. Among the tribal groups in Odisha, the Santhal community is one of the largest in terms of population, with major concentrations in districts such as Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, and Balasore. The Santhals speak Santhali language and use the Ol-Chiki script in cultural and educational contexts. Over the years, primary education has expanded to tribal areas through government and community initiatives, bringing formal schooling within the reach of many Santhal families. Parental involvement in education within tribal communities has gradually become a subject of academic inquiry, particularly in relation to primary schooling. In the context of the Santhal community, it is important to examine how parents engage with the education of their children at the primary level, what forms of involvement exist, and what factors shape such engagement.

2.Significance of the study

This study is important because it tries to understand how Santhal parents take part in the education of their children. The Santhal are a tribal community with low literacy levels even though many government programs are running for their education. According to Census 2011, there are about 7.5 million Santhals in India, and 8,94,764 of them live in Odisha. Their literacy rate in Odisha is 52.24%, and among women it is only 24.75%. Since parental involvement helps children to attend school regularly, perform better and continue schooling, it is necessary to know how Santhal parents support their children's education. This study is carried out in the Betnoti block of Mayurbhanj district to find out their ways of involvement and the problems they face. The findings will also help policy makers to plan better steps for improving parental involvement in tribal education.

3.Statement of the problem

The present study is entitled “**Parental Involvement in the Primary Education of Santhal Children in Mayurbhanj District, Odisha**”

4.Objectives

1. To examine the nature and extent of parental involvement of Santhal parents in their children's primary education.
2. To analyze differences in the patterns of parental involvement between Santhal fathers and mothers, irrespective of their educational status.

3. To identify the perceived psycho-social barriers that affect parental involvement in the educational practices of Santhal parents.

5. Research Questions

1. How do Santhal parents involve themselves in the educational practices of their children at the primary level?
2. How does parental involvement differ between Santhal fathers and mothers with respect to their educational background?
3. What psycho-social barriers do Santhal parents perceive as limiting their involvement in their children's education?

6. Delimitations of the study:

The delimitation are those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study. Through possible steps were taken to make the study on objective one. The major delimitation that pertained the study was the selection of the sample.

- The study is confined to Betnoti block in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha.
- The study is delimited to the Santhali parents who enrolled their children in primary school.

7. Population of the study

In this research work, the population consists of all the santhal parent's village of Saria within the Betnoti Block of Mayurbhanj District, Odisha.

8. Sample

The sample of the present study is consisted of 50 santhal parents, who have enrolled their children in primary schools of Saria village, Betnoti block between the classes 1 to class 5. All the Santhal parents were selected purposively as they serve the objectives of this ethnographic research to provide rich information from the participants' perspective.

9. Tools

In the present study, the researcher employed a self-designed tool-a questionnaire in the form of checklist, unstructured interview and observation for the collection of data for research.

10. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using simple percentage analysis for descriptive interpretation, supported by tabulation and graphical representation. Qualitative data obtained through interviews and observation were analyzed thematically to capture parents' perspectives in depth.

11. Findings

11.1. Educational Status of Parents

The researcher has taken parents' educational status to analyze the demographic data participant of the parents to get the in-depth data.

Table 1: Educational distribution of parents

Sl. No.	Education status	Numbers (%)		Total
		Father	Mother	
01.	Illiterate	Nil	02(08%)	02(08%)
02.	Primary	08(32%)	22(88%)	30(60%)
03.	Secondary	14(56%)	01(04%)	15(30%)
04.	College	02(08%)	Nil	02(08%)
05.	Graduation	01(04%)	Nil	01(04%)
Total		25	25	50

Based on Table 1, the educational status of the Santhal parents in Saria village indicates an overall low level of formal education. Most fathers have attained education up to the secondary level (56%), while a small proportion have completed college (8%) or graduation (4%), suggesting limited access to higher education. In contrast, the majority of mothers have education only up to the primary level (88%), with a few being illiterate (8%) and none having studied beyond the secondary level. Although almost all fathers are literate, the educational attainment of mothers remains particularly low. This finding highlights a clear gender gap in educational attainment among Santhal parents and reflects the generally low educational status of the community.

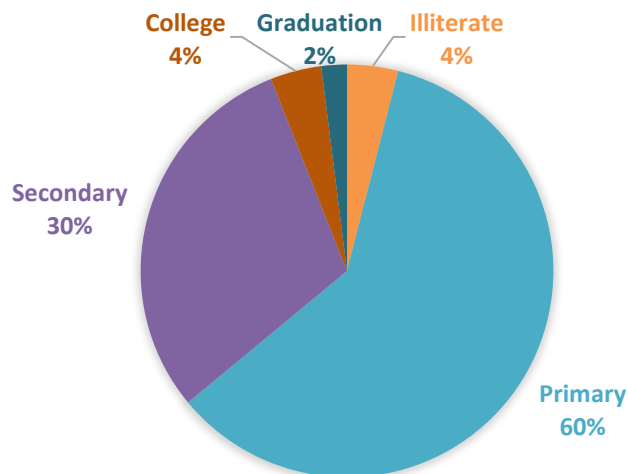


Figure 1: Graphical representation of educational status of parents

11.2. Nature of Involvement of Parents

The present study examines parental involvement in children's education through two major dimensions: home-based involvement and school-based involvement.

- Home-based involvement includes two aspects:
 - (i) seeking information from the child about daily classroom experiences, and
 - (ii) helping the child in completing homework.
- School-based involvement consists of three aspects:
 - (i) contact and communication with teachers,
 - (ii) attendance at Parent–Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, and
 - (iii) volunteering in school activities.

The study also analyses the regularity of parents' engagement in both home- and school-based involvement. In addition, it explores the psycho-social barriers that hinder parental involvement in their children's education. The major barriers identified are parents' low self-efficacy in supporting educational activities, lack of time, language difficulties, and parents' perceived attitude of teachers. Patterns of parental involvement and the associated barriers are presented through tabulation to analyze regularity, while thematic analysis is used to obtain in-depth insights from the parents' perspectives.

11.2.1. Home-based involvement of santhal parents

Table 2: Home-based involvement of santhal parents

Sl. No.	Home-based involvement	Regularity of the parents		Number (%)	Total	
01.	Seeking daily Class Experience from the child	Father	Regularly	04(16%)	19(76%)	54%
			Occasionally	15(60%)		
			Never	06(24%)		
		Mother	regularly	02(08%)	08(32%)	
			Occasionally	06(24%)		
			Never	17(68%)		
02.	Help the child In completing homework	Father	Regularly	04(16%)	16(64%)	46%
			Occasionally	12(48%)		
			Never	08(32%)		
		Mother	Regularly	01(04%)	07(42%)	
			Occasionally	06(24%)		
			Never	18(72%)		

Based on Table 2, the home-based involvement of Santhal parents in their children's primary education is examined through two activities: seeking information about the child's daily classroom experiences and helping the child in completing homework. The findings show noticeable differences between fathers and mothers in the level of involvement. Overall, about

54% of parents seek daily class experience from their children, while 46% do not. Fathers are more involved than mothers, with 76% of fathers seeking information about daily school activities either regularly or occasionally, whereas only 32% of mothers do so. Most mothers (68%) never ask their children about daily classroom experiences. Regarding homework support, 46% of parents assist their children either regularly or occasionally, while 54% do not provide any help. Again, fathers show higher involvement, as 64% of fathers help their children with homework, compared to only 42% of mothers. A large proportion of mothers (72%) never assist in homework completion. These findings indicate that home-based parental involvement among the Santhal community is limited, with fathers playing a more active role than mothers in supporting their children's education at home.

11.2.2. School-based involvement

Table 3: School-based involvement

Sl.no.	School-based involvement	Regularity of the parents		Number (%)	Total	
01.	Communication With the teacher	Father	Regularly	02(08%)	18(72%)	48%
			Occasionally	16(60%)		
			Never	06(24%)		
		Mother	regularly	02(08%)	06(24%)	
			Occasionally	04(16%)		
			Never	19(76%)		
02.	Attend PTA	Father	Regularly	03(12%)	17(68%)	62%
			Occasionally	14(56%)		
			Never	08(32%)		
		Mother	Regularly	05(20%)	14(56%)	
			Occasionally	09(36%)		
			Never	11(44%)		
03.	Volunteering in school	Father	Regularly	04(16%)	17(68%)	54%
			Occasionally	13(52%)		
			Never	08(32%)		
		Mother	Regularly	03(12%)	10(40%)	
			Occasionally	07(28%)		
			Never	15(60%)		

Based on Table 4.2.2, the school-based involvement of Santhal parents in their children's primary education is analysed through three activities: contact and communication with teachers,

attendance at Parent–Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, and volunteering in school activities. The findings indicate that school-based parental involvement is generally moderate to low, with clear differences between fathers and mothers.

In terms of contact and communication with teachers, only 48% of parents reported regular or occasional interaction, while 52% had no contact at all. Fathers showed higher involvement, as 72% of fathers communicated with teachers either regularly or occasionally, compared to only 24% of mothers. A large majority of mothers (76%) reported no communication with teachers.

Regarding attendance at PTA meetings, about 62% of parents attended PTA meetings either regularly or occasionally, while 38% never attended. Fathers were more active, with 68% attending at least once, whereas 56% of mothers attended PTA meetings, mostly on an occasional basis. Attendance was higher among fathers with relatively better educational attainment.

In relation to volunteering in school activities, around 54% of parents participated in school-related activities, while 46% did not volunteer. Fathers again showed greater involvement, with 68% participating in school development and co-curricular activities, compared to 40% of mothers. Mothers’ participation was mainly limited to those directly or indirectly associated with the school, such as cooks or health workers.

Overall, the findings suggest that school-based parental involvement among the Santhal community is limited, with fathers playing a more prominent role than mothers. Educational level, occupational responsibilities, and limited interaction with school authorities appear to influence the extent of parental involvement in school-related activities.

11.3. Psycho-social barriers of santhal tribes

Table 4: Psycho-social barrier of santhal tribes

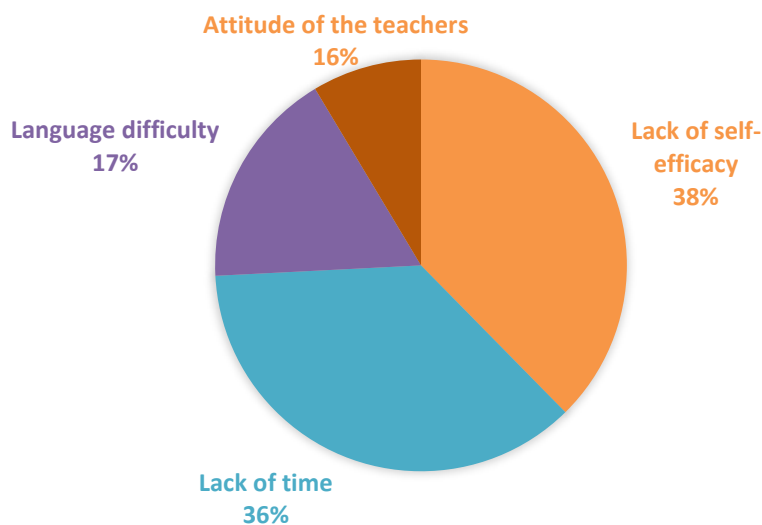
Sl.no.	Barriers to parental involvement	Father	Mother	Total
01.	Lack of self-efficacy	13(56%)	22(88%)	35(70%)
02.	Lack of time	16(64%)	18(72%)	34(68%)
03.	Language difficulty	Nil	16(66%)	16(32%)
04.	Attitude of the teachers	03(12%)	05(20%)	08(16%)
Total		25	25	50

Based on Table 4.3, the study identifies four major interactional barriers that hinder parental involvement in the education of Santhal children: lack of self-efficacy, lack of time, language difficulty, and parents’ perception of teachers’ attitudes. The findings show that lack of self-efficacy is the most significant barrier, reported by 70% of parents. This barrier is more pronounced among mothers (88%) than fathers (56%), largely due to the low educational attainment of parents, particularly mothers, which limits their confidence in supporting their children’s academic activities.

Lack of time is another major constraint, reported by 68% of parents, with 64% of fathers and 72% of mothers indicating that occupational and household responsibilities restrict their involvement in their children's education.

Language difficulty emerges as a gender-specific barrier, affecting 32% of parents, mainly mothers. While fathers are generally proficient in Odia, a majority of mothers (66%) face difficulty in speaking Odia, as they primarily communicate in the Santhali language, which limits their interaction with teachers and their ability to support school-related activities.

In contrast, perceived teachers' attitude is reported as a barrier by a relatively small proportion of parents (16%). Most parents view teachers as approachable and well-mannered, indicating that teacher behaviour is not a major obstacle to parental involvement. Overall, the findings suggest that low self-efficacy, time constraints, and language barriers especially among mothers significantly limit parental involvement in the education of Santhal children.



12. Conclusion Figure 2: Graphical representation of Psycho-social barriers of Santhal tribes

Parental involvement plays a significant role in enhancing students' academic achievement and overall development, irrespective of their socio-cultural background. The present study highlights the patterns and challenges of parental involvement among the Santhal tribe, an indigenous community with its own distinct culture, beliefs, and lifestyle. Despite valuing education, the Santhal community remains socio-economically disadvantaged, which limits parents' participation in their children's academic activities. The findings of the study reveal that parental involvement both at home and at school is generally low, particularly among mothers, due to factors such as low educational attainment, lack of time, language barriers, and limited self-efficacy.

Although various governmental and policy initiatives have been introduced for the development of Scheduled Tribe communities, the study indicates that focused efforts are still required to strengthen parental involvement in tribal areas. Educational authorities and policymakers need to design culturally responsive strategies that empower parents, build their confidence, and improve school–family relationships. Strengthening parental involvement among tribal communities is essential not only for improving children’s educational outcomes but also for achieving broader goals of inclusive and socio-economic development.

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