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Effectiveness of Residential Schools in Promoting Tribal Education in Jammu & Kashmir

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Abstract

Tribal communities in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities, face various challenges in accessing and continuing education. Seasonal migration, difficult geographical conditions, language barriers, and economic difficulties often interrupt schooling of children from these regions. The present study explores the effectiveness of residential schools compared with non-residential government schools in promoting tribal education in the Rajouri and Poonch districts of Jammu and Kashmir. A descriptive-comparative survey design was used to conduct the study, Data were collected from 300 tribal students, comprising 150 residential and 150 non-residential students, along with 60 teachers from 12 institutions. The study focused on academic achievement, school attendance, retention, psychosocial adjustment, and the availability of institutional facilities. The findings revealed that students in residential schools performed significantly better academic achievement and had higher annual attendance rates than students attending non-residential schools. However, various challenges were identified in residential institutions, including inadequate heating and bedding during winter, lack of proper access to medical care, and insufficient emotional support for students experiencing homesickness. These findings necessitates the need for improving residential school facilities, implementing bilingual teaching approaches that reflect linguistic backgrounds of students, and ensure better emotional and social support.

Key Words: *Tribal Education, Residential Schools, Tribal Communities, Jammu and Kashmir.*

Introduction

Education is an effective instrument for enhancing socioeconomic mobility, promoting social justice, and empowering marginalized populations. Scheduled Tribes account for about 11.9% of the total population (Census of India, 2011) in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. More than 73% of its tribal population comprises the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities. Traditionally these communities practice a transhumant pastoral system including seasonal migration between alpine pastures called Dhoks in summer and lower altitude regions in winter for supporting livestock rearing.

The tribal communities' nomadic way of life poses problems for providing consistent schooling for their children. To support their education during seasonal migration, the government has introduced mobile tent schools that travel with the Kafilas (caravans). But harsh climatic conditions, inaccessible locations, inadequate resources and irregular teacher attendance often mean these schools are not able to meet children's educational needs effectively.

The government has taken some initiatives to improve educational opportunities for tribal children by expanding residential facilities such as EMRS, KGBVs, and Gujjar and Bakarwal hostels. These institutions facilitate children to continue their studies without being repeatedly affected by seasonal migration of their families. It ensures to provide accommodation, food, uniforms, and academic support. Hence it is important to study whether these facilities are helping students perform better academically and develop socially, emotionally, and personally.

The residential school provides a different solution to these problems, especially for children whose education is interrupted by seasonal family migration. Such institutions can provide accommodation and opportunities for continuous learning to enable children to gain access to formal education. However, there is a need for more empirical research to understand the extent to which these schools are able to meet the educational needs of tribal children in the border districts of Jammu and Kashmir. Most of the existing studies have addressed the broader issues of the pastoral life or have explored the tribal education policies at the general level. Further research is needed to compare the residential and day-school settings in terms of students' academic achievement, attendance and social adjustment.

The present study aims to bridge this research gap by comparing academic performance, school attendance and social adjustment of students studying in residential and non-residential schools. This study intends to add to the knowledge of the schooling experiences of tribal students and what contribution different school

setups have for their development. The findings may help educational administrators, the Tribal Affairs Department of Jammu and Kashmir, and curriculum planners identify existing challenges, improve the quality of residential schooling, and develop educational strategies that respond more effectively to the geographical, social, and cultural circumstances of tribal communities living in mountainous regions.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find the academic achievement of tribal students enrolled in residential schools with those attending non-residential government schools in Jammu & Kashmir.
2. To find attendance and retention rates between residential and non-residential tribal students.
3. To find the psychosocial adjustment and learning engagement of tribal students across both schooling models.
4. To find infrastructural adequacy and residential facilities (dormitories, dietary support, sanitation, medical care, and study spaces) in tribal residential schools.
5. To find the primary institutional challenges teachers and school administrators face in residential settings.

Hypotheses of the Study

$H_{01:}$ There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of tribal students enrolled in residential schools and those enrolled in non-residential schools.

$H_{02:}$ There is no significant difference in the annual attendance rates of tribal students between residential and non-residential schools.

$H_{03:}$ There is no significant difference in the psychosocial adjustment scores of tribal students between residential and non-residential schools.

$H_{04:}$ There is no significant difference in academic achievement between male and female students enrolled in tribal residential schools.

Review of Related Studies

Dar (2015) studied the educational challenges faced by the Gujjar community in Jammu & Kashmir and found that elementary schools in remote tribal villages suffered from severe infrastructure deficits like lacking safe drinking water, separate toilets for girls, and basic first-aid facilities that caused sustained dropouts among pastoral

children. Jan (2014) studied the educational status of Gujjars and Bakarwals in the Anantnag district and found an average literacy rate below 30%. It also identified some barriers to consistent school participation such as long walking distances, harsh seasonal weather, parental poverty, and low parental and community awareness. Ganie (2018) studied the educational status of Gujjar children in South Kashmir and found that transhumance and heavy reliance on livestock directly hindered access to school. It also found that children enrolled in residential hostels showed higher academic retention than non-hostel peers. Suri and Raina (2016) studied the educational status of the Bakarwal tribe in Rajouri district and identified considerable gender disparities in school enrolment. The study revealed that educational participation of girls was affected by restricted freedom of movement and the burden of household duties, challenges that conventional day schools were unable to address adequately. Rahi (2019) studied the educational marginalization of nomadic tribes in Jammu & Kashmir and found that mobile schools were structurally unable to facilitate qualitative secondary education. The study also found that implementing residential schools offers the most sustainable solutions for handling transhumant dropouts. Bhat (2020) studied education of tribal children in Jammu and Kashmir and found that residential schools and hostels played an important role in ensuring stability in the academic streams of nomadic children. However, various challenges hindered their effectiveness such as language barriers, inadequate heating during the winter, and the issues of representation of tribal cultures in curriculum.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-comparative survey design using quantitative assessments combined with structured institutional evaluations.

Sample and Population

The study used a stratified random sampling technique to select a sample of 300 tribal students who enrolled in Classes VIII to X across the Rajouri and Poonch districts of Jammu & Kashmir. This sample was divided equally into two distinct cohorts: a residential cohort comprising 150 students (75 boys and 75 girls) drawn from residential schools and a non-residential cohort of 150 students (75 boys and 75 girls) selected from conventional schools. Additionally, a purposive sampling technique was used to select 60 educators taken from residential and non-residential institutions to

assess institutional functioning and operational challenges.

Research Instruments

1. Academic Achievement Metric: Composite scores calculated from records of standardized district annual examination performance in Mathematics, Science, Social Science, and Language (scored out of 100).

2. Student Attendance and Retention Scale (SARS): Taken from verified school registries over the preceding academic session.

3. Psychosocial Adjustment Inventory (PAI): A 30-item Likert scale (Cronbach's α = 0.84) that measures emotional well-being, peer relations, academic self-concept, and institutional belonging.

4. Institutional Infrastructure and Facilities Checklist (IIFC): It assesses five core residential domains: physical facilities, nutrition, sanitation, medical services, and learning resources. It is administered to teachers and wardens.

Statistical Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation) and inferential statistics (Independent Samples t-test) that evaluated at the α = .05 and α = .01 significance levels.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1

Comparison of Academic Achievement Between Residential and Non-Residential Tribal Students

School Category	N	Mean Score (M)	SD	t-value	p-value & Sig.
Residential Schools	150	68.42	8.35	9.82	p < .001 (Sig. at .01)
Non-Residential Schools	150	58.14	9.68	-	-

Table 1 shows that tribal students enrolled in residential schools attained a mean academic score of 68.42 (SD = 8.35), whereas their counterpart in non-residential schools attained a mean score of 58.14 (SD = 9.68). The calculated t-value is 9.82 (p < .001), which is statistically significant at the .01 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the academic achievement of

tribal students enrolled in residential schools and those enrolled in non-residential schools is rejected. This shows that that residential schools significantly improve the academic achievement of tribal students by preventing them from domestic chores and agricultural or pastoral labor during school hours.

Table 2

Comparison of Annual Attendance Rates Between Residential and Non-Residential Tribal Students

School Category	N	Mean Att. (%)	SD	t-value	p-value & Sig.
Residential Schools	150	88.60%	5.24	16.48	p < .001 (Sig. at .01)
Non-Residential Schools	150	69.15%	12.80	-	-

Table 2 shows that the mean attendance rate for residential students was 88.60% (SD = 5.24), compared to 69.15% (SD = 12.80) for non-residential day scholars. The calculated t-value is 16.48 ($p < .001$), that shows statistical significance at the .01 level. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the annual attendance rates of tribal students between residential and non-residential schools is rejected. It shows that residential schools facilitate a stable daily routine that help them continue education without much interruptions caused by seasonal migration and long distance travelling to school.

Table 3

Comparison of Psychosocial Adjustment Scores Between Residential and Non-Residential Tribal Students

School Category	N	Mean Score (M)	SD	t-value	p-value & Sig.
Residential Schools	150	72.10	11.20	2.19	p = .029 (Sig. at .05)
Non-Residential Schools	150	69.25	11.45	-	-

Table 3 shows that students in residential schools had a higher mean psychosocial adjustment score (M = 72.10, SD = 11.20) than students in non-residential schools (M = 69.25, SD = 11.45). The calculated t-value of 2.19 shows that this difference is statistically significant at the .05 level ($p = .029$). Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the psychosocial adjustment scores of tribal students between residential and non-residential schools. is rejected. The finding suggest that residential school students had better psychosocial adjustment than their non-residential counterparts. However, the difference in mean scores was relatively

small. Although residential schooling may give opportunities for peer interaction and help students develop confidence in their academic abilities, some students may also experience difficulties such as separation from family, homesickness, and adjustment to a structured school environment.

Table 4

Comparison Academic Performance of Tribal Students in Residential Schools based on Gender

Gender Group	N	Mean Score (M)	SD	t-value	p-value & Sig.
Male Students	75	68.90	8.10	0.70	p = .484 (Not Sig.)
Female Students	75	67.94	8.61	-	-

Table 4 shows that male students in residential schools obtained a mean score of 68.90 (SD = 8.10), while female students obtained a mean score of 67.94 (SD = 8.61). The calculated t-value of 0.70, with a p-value of .484 which shows that the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant at the .05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in academic achievement between male and female students enrolled in tribal residential schools is retained. The finding shows that male and female students in residential schools performed at a similar level on the measure examined, with no statistically significant difference between their scores. Residential schools may help girls continue their education by giving a supportive learning environment and reducing some of the difficulties connected with household responsibilities and social restrictions. However, the present findings do not establish whether residential schooling has reduced these challenges or whether boys and girls experience equal educational opportunities in all respects.

Table 5

Infrastructural and Institutional Adequacy in Tribal Residential Schools (N = 60 Educators/Wardens)

Facility / Parameter	Adequate (f)	Adequate (%)	Inadequate (f)	Inadequate (%)
Safe Drinking Water Supply	44	73.33%	16	26.67%
Regular Nutritional Diet (Mess)	48	80%	12	20%

Facility / Parameter	Adequate (f)	Adequate (%)	Inadequate (f)	Inadequate (%)
Separate & Functional Bathrooms	38	63.33%	22	36.67%
Winter Heating & Bedding	19	31.67%	41	68.33%
Dedicated Study Rooms & Libraries	26	43.33%	34	56.67%
On-site Medical & Health Care	15	25%	45	75%
Digital/ICT Classrooms	18	30%	42	70%

Table 5 shows the views of 60 educators and wardens regarding the status of facilities in tribal residential schools. The findings show that food and drinking water facilities were relatively satisfactory, with 80% of respondents reporting adequate nutritional arrangements and 73.33% considering the drinking water supply adequate. However, several important shortcomings were identified. It showed that about 36.67% of respondents reported inadequate bathroom facilities, while 68.33% indicated that winter heating and bedding were insufficient. Similarly, 56.67% reported a lack of adequate study rooms and library facilities, which may hinder opportunities of students for independent learning and academic preparation. Healthcare was another major concern, as 75% of respondents reported inadequate on-site medical facilities. In addition, 70% reported that digital and ICT learning facilities were insufficient. These findings suggest that improvements are needed in healthcare, winter accommodation, study facilities, and digital infrastructure though some basic needs are being met in many of the institutions. It is important to address these issues to ensure that tribal students receive not only formal education but also a safe, comfortable, and supportive residential learning environment.

Major Findings

- Students in residential schools showed better academic achievement than those attending day schools. This suggests that residential schooling may help tribal students continue their studies in a more stable and supportive learning environment.
- Students in residential schools attended classes more regularly than those in non-residential schools. Living on campus may reduce the difficulties caused by seasonal migration and long distance travelling that may help students maintain regular attendance.
- Residential school students showed better psychosocial adjustment than day-

school students. However, the difference was relatively small which suggest that residential schooling may support social development of students though some students may still experience difficulties in adjusting issues of being away from their families.

- Boys and girls in residential schools demonstrated similar academic results that showed no statistically significant difference. This finding suggests that girls can perform academically at a level comparable to boys in residential settings, although further evidence is essential to determine whether residential schooling reduces the social and domestic challenges.
- Despite these positive findings, several residential schools lacked essential facilities. Many respondents reported inadequate healthcare, insufficient heating and bedding during winter, and limited digital learning resources. It is important to improving these facilities to ensure that tribal students receive a safe, comfortable, and supportive educational experience.

Discussion

The findings suggest that residential schools are pivotal in reducing the educational difficulties faced by children from the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities. Education of children is often interrupted when their families move to high-altitude pastures during spring in normal day schools. Residential schools provide a stable place to live and study which may faciltate students to continue their education without being directly affected by these seasonal movements.

These findings are consistent with the studies of Ganie (2018) and Rahi (2019), who discussed the benefits of residential schooling that includes regular study time and relief from some of the household and pastoral responsibilities connected with seasonal migration. It also shows the comparable academic performance of boys and girls in residential schools that reflects the importance of ensuring for girls a safe and supportive learning environment. This observation is also in line with the work of Suri and Raina (2016) that discussed the educational challenges faced by girls in the Bakarwal community.

However, residential schooling also face some important challenges. The relatively small difference in psychosocial adjustment between residential and day-school students suggests that living in a residential institution does not automatically ensure better social and emotional well-being. As noted in the studies of Dar (2015) and Bhat

(2020), separation from family, difficulties in understanding the language of instruction, particularly for children whose first language is Gojri, and inadequate healthcare and heating facilities may affect comfort and adjustment of students. These concerns highlight the need to improve residential facilities and provide appropriate emotional, linguistic, and academic support so that tribal children can benefit more from their educational experiences.

Conclusion

Residential schooling can play an important role in improving educational opportunities for tribal children in Jammu and Kashmir. It is very essential to tribal communities, especially those belonging to the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities as their education is often affected by seasonal migration and difficult geographical conditions. Regular classroom instruction, and a structured daily routine, residential schools help children continue their studies without frequent interruptions caused by movements of their families, if needed provisions are taken for ensuring accommodation facilities. Residential schools facilitate greater opportunities for both girls and boys to develop their potential and creative abilities as well as accelerate academic achievements.

Educational and Policy Implications

• Improvement of Residential School Infrastructure: Residential schools in districts such as Rajouri, Poonch and Anantnag need better facilities to allow students to live and study comfortably and this may need to be increased during the harsh winter months. Good insulation, warm dormitories, reliable hot water supplies, and access to medical care are essential to protect students' health and well-being.

• Promoting Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Education: Many tribal children speak Gojri or Pahari at home, and it will be difficult to learn when classroom instruction are in unfamiliar languages. Teachers should begin with the known languages to support early learning and then gradually help the students to be fluent in Urdu, Hindi and English. Classroom activities and textbooks should also reflect tribal traditions, cultural values, and students' everyday experiences.

• Improving Emotional and Social Support: Children find it difficult to be separated from their families, especially children from close-knit pastoral families. Residential schools should provide counselling services, opportunities for discussion of personal problems and regular family visits or other meaningful contact. These measures can

help students to cope with homesickness, to settle into residential life, and to sustain their family and cultural links.

• Enhance Access to Residential Education: More residential school facilities may be needed in areas where tribal children are unable to access regular schooling because of seasonal migration and geographical barriers. It would be more beneficial for children to continue their education without frequent interruptions by expanding Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs).

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