

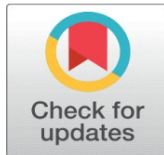
EXPLORING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THARU AND NON-THARU STUDENTS IN BIHAR

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the academic achievement of Tharu and Non-Tharu adolescents in the Bagaha (sub division of west Champaran) Bihar, with a particular focus on gender differences and tribal identity. The educational landscape in India is marked by significant disparities, especially among marginalized communities, where socio-economic factors and cultural influences play crucial roles in shaping academic outcomes. This paper aims to explore the academic performance of Tharu and non-Tharu adolescents' students of Bagaha (sub division of west Champaran) Bihar. Sample consisted of 400 adolescent's students randomly selected from the school. Academic achievement was obtained from the schools. Gender wise and category wise comparisons were done using, Mean, S.D. and independent t-test. The results indicate that Tharu students, despite facing cultural and infrastructural challenges, perform relatively well compared to non-Tharu students. Additionally, female adolescents consistently outperform their male counterparts in both tribal and non-tribal categories. This finding aligns with existing literature that suggests gender dynamics significantly impact educational performance, with girls often exhibiting higher academic motivation and support. Furthermore, the study reveals a substantial difference in academic achievement between tribal male and female students, highlighting the need for targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by tribal communities. By contributing to the understanding of educational disparities in the Bagaha, this research underscores the importance of inclusive educational policies and culturally relevant curricula. The findings call for increased community engagement and support systems to enhance academic outcomes for all students, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds. Ultimately, this study aims to inform policymakers and educators about the necessity of addressing the intersectionality of gender and tribal identity in educational planning and implementation.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Tribal Identity, Gender Differences, Tharu Community, Educational Disparities

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1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of society is largely dependent on education, which influences both individual and collective growth. In India, the educational landscape is shaped by various factors, including socio-economic status, gender, and cultural identity. The Bagaha (sub division of west Champaran) Bihar, known for its diverse population comprising tribal and non-tribal communities, presents a unique context for examining academic achievement. Among these communities, the Tharu tribe, with its distinct cultural heritage, faces challenges that can significantly impact educational outcomes.

Understanding the academic performance of different demographic groups in this region is essential for developing targeted educational interventions.

Academic success is seen as a crucial factor in evaluating a person's overall potential and abilities. Thus, it is more important than ever for people and pupils to acquire good academic standards. Academic achievement is, in this sense, the obtained ability to complete school tasks, which can be generic or specialized to a given subject matter. The term achievement refers to the degree or amount of success attained in some specific school duties, notably scholastic performance. Self-perception and self-evaluation of one's objective academic achievements can be used to characterize academic achievement. Academic success typically reflects a student's learning objectives. A sequence of controlled and planned experiences is needed to achieve those learning objectives. According to Good (1973), academic achievement is defined as "knowledge, attitude, or skill developed in the school subject usually designed by test scores or by teacher marks assigned, or by both." As a result, one approach to characterize academic achievement is as one's impression and appraisal of one's own objective success.

Research indicates that academic achievement is often influenced by gender disparities, with studies showing that female students tend to outperform their male counterparts in various educational settings. For instance, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has highlighted that girls in rural India are increasingly achieving better academic results due to a combination of family support and community initiatives aimed at promoting female education. Conversely, male students, particularly in tribal areas, may encounter societal pressures that hinder their academic performance.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The academic achievement of students is a multifaceted issue influenced by a variety of factors, including socio-economic status, cultural identity, gender, and educational environment. This section reviews existing literature relevant to the academic performance of tribal and non-tribal students, with a specific focus on the Bagaha District in Bihar, gender differences in academic achievement, and the impact of cultural identity on education.

Academic Achievement Among Tribal Students

Research indicates that tribal students often face unique challenges in their educational journeys. According to Kaur and Sethi (2017), tribal students in India experience barriers such as inadequate educational infrastructure, socio-economic disadvantages, and cultural alienation, which adversely affect their academic performance. Studies by Sharma (2019) also highlight the importance of cultural relevance in education, suggesting that curricula that respect and incorporate tribal heritage can enhance the learning experiences of these students.

In the context of the Tharu community, it is essential to consider their specific socio-cultural dynamics. Singh (2018) found that tribal communities, including the Tharu, often prioritize traditional knowledge and practices over formal education, leading to lower academic performance compared to their non-tribal peers. However, initiatives aimed at integrating local knowledge into the curriculum have shown promise in improving engagement and achievement among tribal students (Desai & Nanda, 2019).

Gender Differences in Academic Achievement

Numerous studies have documented gender disparities in academic performance across various educational settings. Research by Singh and Sharma (2020) found that female students in rural India often achieve better academic results than their male counterparts, attributed to increased parental support for girls' education and targeted educational programs. Furthermore, Gupta (2019) noted that societal expectations and gender roles significantly influence academic motivation and achievement, with girls often exhibiting higher levels of perseverance in their studies.

Conversely, male students in tribal regions may face pressures that deter academic engagement. O'Rourke (2018) highlighted that cultural norms often emphasize male labor over education, leading to lower educational aspirations among tribal boys. This gender dynamic is critical in understanding the academic achievements of male and female students in Bagaha District, particularly in the context of tribal identity.

Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Education

The socio-cultural context plays a significant role in shaping educational outcomes. As noted by Rai and Ranjan (2020), factors such as family background, community support, and access to educational resources are crucial in determining student success. The National Policy on Education (2020) emphasizes the need for inclusive education that

respects diverse cultural backgrounds, suggesting that culturally responsive teaching practices can enhance academic achievement for marginalized groups, including tribal students.

Moreover, Desai and Nanda (2019) pointed out that educational interventions that involve community participation tend to be more effective in improving academic outcomes for tribal students. Programs designed to empower parents and community members to take an active role in their children's education can lead to improved academic performance and greater retention rates.

Regional Context: Bagaha District, Bihar

Bagaha District, located in Bihar, is characterized by its diverse population and socio-economic challenges. Research by Chaudhary and Ranjan (2020) indicates that educational disparities persist in this region, particularly among tribal communities. The study highlighted that socio-economic factors such as poverty and limited access to quality schools significantly hinder educational attainment for many students.

In conclusion, the literature underscores the importance of considering socio-cultural factors, gender differences, and community engagement when examining academic achievement in diverse populations. The findings of this review will inform the current study's objectives and hypotheses, providing a foundation for exploring the academic performance of Tharu and Non-Tharu adolescents in Bagaha District. Through this examination, the study aims to contribute valuable insights into the dynamics of education in India, particularly in marginalized communities, ultimately informing policy and practice aimed at promoting educational equity.

3. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The rationale for this study stems from the need to understand the educational disparities that exist among different demographic groups within the Bagaha District of Bihar, specifically focusing on tribal and non-tribal adolescents. Several factors contribute to the educational outcomes of students, and this study aims to explore how tribal identity, gender, and socio-economic conditions intersect to influence academic achievement.

1. Significance of Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is a crucial indicator of an individual's potential for success in life, including employment opportunities, social mobility, and overall well-being. In the Indian context, where education is viewed as a pathway to empowerment and progress, understanding the factors that contribute to academic success is essential. By investigating the performance of Tharu and Non-Tharu students, this study seeks to shed light on the educational challenges faced by tribal communities, which often remain marginalized in academic discourse.

2. Addressing Educational Inequities

The Bagaha District is characterized by significant socio-economic disparities, and tribal populations, such as the Tharu, often encounter systemic barriers that hinder their educational attainment. Previous research has indicated that tribal students frequently face challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, limited access to quality education, and cultural disconnection from the formal education system. By examining these issues, this study aims to highlight the importance of addressing educational inequities to promote inclusivity and equitable opportunities for all students.

3. Understanding Gender Dynamics

Gender plays a vital role in shaping educational experiences and outcomes. Research has shown that female students in rural India tend to outperform their male counterparts due to increased support for girls' education and evolving societal attitudes. However, within tribal communities, traditional gender roles may impact academic aspirations and performance differently. This study aims to explore these dynamics by comparing the academic achievements of male and female students within both tribal and non-tribal categories, thereby contributing to the discourse on gender and education.

4. Informing Educational Policy and Practice

The findings from this study can provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders aiming to create more equitable educational environments. Understanding the specific challenges and successes of Tharu and Non-Tharu students can inform the development of targeted interventions that address the unique needs of these groups. Additionally, by highlighting effective practices that enhance academic achievement, this study aims to contribute to the formulation of educational policies that foster inclusivity and support for marginalized communities.

5. Contributing to Academic Research

While there is a growing body of literature addressing educational disparities in India, there is limited research specifically focused on the Bagaha District and its tribal populations. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing empirical data on academic achievement across different demographic groups. The research aims to enrich the academic discourse on education in India, particularly concerning the intersectionality of tribal identity and gender, thereby encouraging further exploration in this critical area.

In conclusion, the rationale for this study is grounded in the urgency to understand and address the academic challenges faced by diverse student populations in the Bagaha District. By investigating the complex interplay of cultural identity, gender, and socio-economic factors, this research aims to contribute to the broader goal of achieving educational equity and improving academic outcomes for all students, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds.

Objectives:

- 1) To compare the academic achievement of Tharu and Non-Tharu adolescents in the Bagaha District of Bihar.
- 2) To examine the gender differences in academic achievement among adolescents (both tribal and non-tribal) in the region.
- 3) To analyse the impact of tribal identity on academic performance, distinguishing between tribal male and female adolescents.
- 4) To investigate the academic performance of non-tribal male and female adolescents, determining whether gender plays a significant role.

Hypotheses:

H1: There will be a significant difference in academic achievement between Tharu and Non-Tharu adolescents in the Bagaha District.

H2: Female adolescents will have significantly higher academic achievement than male adolescents in both tribal and non-tribal groups.

H3: Tribal female adolescents will have higher academic achievement compared to tribal male adolescents.

H4: Non-tribal female adolescents will have higher academic achievement compared to non-tribal male adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Simple descriptive survey method has been employed to study and compare the variables under the study. The adolescents studying in class VIII, IX and X in various secondary schools/ inter colleges of age group 12 to 14 years of Bagaha district during the academic session of 2022-23 constituted the population of the study.

SAMPLE

The sample of present study consisted of four hundred Tharu (200) and non-Tharu (200) adolescents studying in different types of schools. To ensure the representiveness of schools, equal number of boys and girls in each group were sampled from schools.

Academic achievement

In this study, academic achievement has been defined as the percentage of the marks obtained by the students in their two previous annual school examinations.

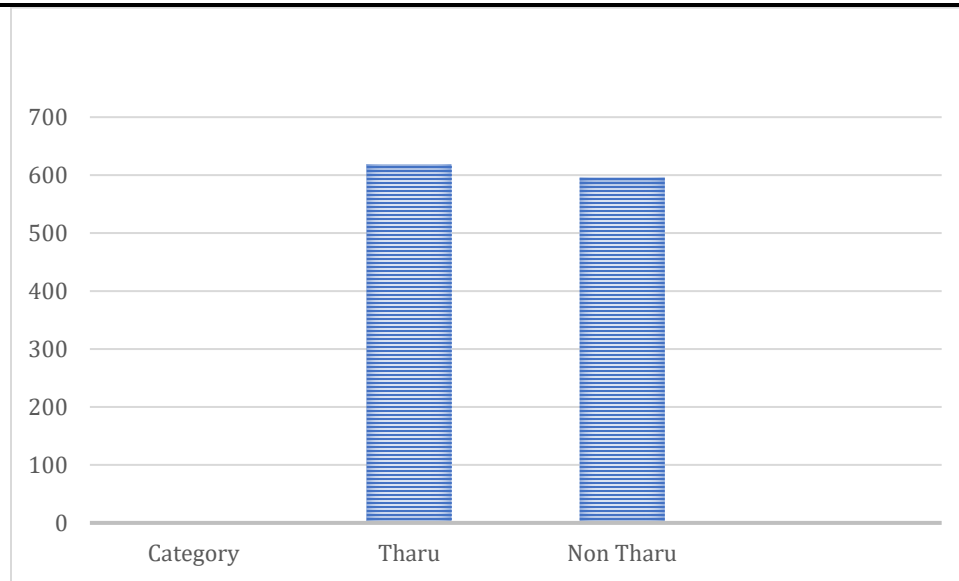
Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1

Comparison of academic achievement of Tharu and Non-Tharu students of Bagaha District

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	t value	df
Academic Achievement	Tharu	200	617.4775	104.25456	2.259*	398
	Non Tharu	200	594.9475	94.95387		

*Significant at 0.05 level

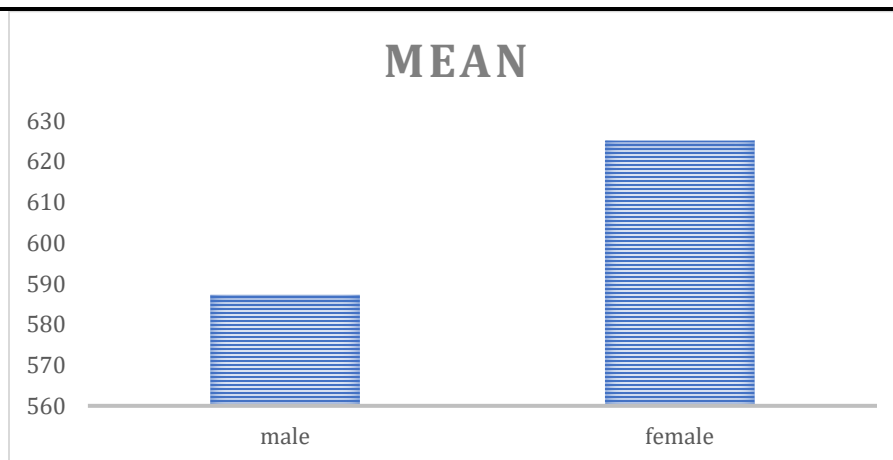


The results of the independent samples t-test presented in Table 1 indicate a statistically significant difference in academic achievement between Tharu and Non-Tharu students in the Bagaha District. The Tharu students (N = 200) had a mean academic achievement score of **617.48** with a standard deviation of **104.25**. Non-Tharu students (N = 200) exhibited a lower mean score of **594.95**, with a standard deviation of **94.95**. The calculated t-value was **2.259**, with **398 degrees of freedom**, and this difference was significant at the **0.05 level**. This finding suggests that Tharu students significantly outperform their non-Tharu counterparts in terms of academic achievement within the Bagaha District.

The significant difference in academic achievement between Tharu and Non-Tharu students can be attributed to several socio-cultural and educational factors. Tharu students have historically faced socio-economic challenges, yet the current findings indicate their resilience and potential in achieving higher academic scores. Research suggests that cultural identity and community support play crucial roles in student achievement. According to **Nand & Mishra (2018)**, students who have a strong cultural identity often benefit from supportive family structures and community networks that encourage educational attainment. In this context, Tharu students may receive stronger cultural and community backing, promoting academic success. The disparity in academic achievement may also be influenced by the availability of educational resources. **Kumar et al. (2017)** highlights that access to quality education, including experienced teachers and adequate learning materials, significantly affects students' academic performance. If Tharu students have better access to these resources compared to their non-Tharu peers, this could explain their higher academic achievement. The motivational factors among students can also impact academic outcomes. A study by **Singh & Singh (2019)** indicates that students from marginalized communities, when provided with appropriate support and motivation, often exceed expectations. If Tharu students in the Bagaha District have been encouraged to pursue education actively, this could result in their higher academic performance. In conclusion, the significant difference in academic achievement between Tharu and Non-Tharu students in Bagaha District suggests that factors such as cultural support, access to educational resources, motivation, and community engagement are critical to student success. Future educational policies should focus on leveraging these factors to promote equitable academic opportunities for all students, particularly those from marginalized communities. Further research is needed to explore the underlying mechanisms contributing to these differences in academic achievement, which could provide insights for improving educational outcomes across diverse student populations.

Table 2 Comparison of Academic achievement of male and female adolescents of Bagaha District Bihar

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	t value	df
Academic Achievement	male	200	587.3550	103.25046	3.827***	398
	female	200	625.0700	93.62096		
***significant at 0.001 level; p< 0.001						



The results of the independent samples t-test displayed in Table 2 reveal a statistically significant difference in academic achievement between male and female adolescents in the Bagaha District, Bihar. The mean academic achievement for male students ($N = 200$) is **587.36** with a standard deviation of **103.25**. In contrast, female students ($N = 200$) have a higher mean score of **625.07** with a standard deviation of **93.62**. The t-value is **3.827**, with **398 degrees of freedom**, and this difference is statistically significant at the **0.001 level** ($p < 0.001$). These results indicate that female adolescents significantly outperform their male counterparts in academic achievement in the Bagaha District.

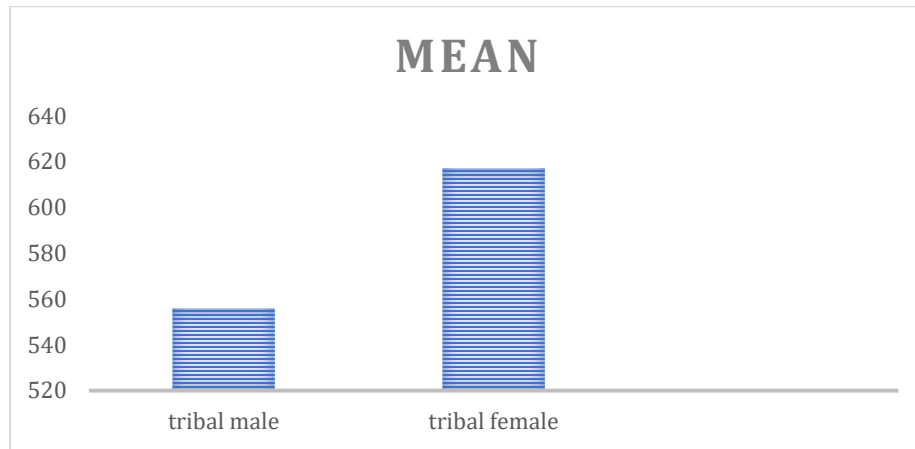
The significant difference in academic achievement between male and female adolescents highlights the changing dynamics in educational performance and gender roles within the context of Bagaha District. The results demonstrate that female students have a statistically significant advantage over male students in academic achievement. This trend aligns with findings from other studies that suggest females often perform better academically in various contexts. For instance, **Lindberg et al. (2010)** found that girls tend to outperform boys in reading and writing assessments across many educational systems. This phenomenon may be attributed to several factors, including differences in learning styles and classroom engagement. The observed academic success of female students could be influenced by changing societal attitudes towards girls' education. According to **Kumar & Srivastava (2019)**, there has been a progressive shift in the perception of female education in India, especially in rural areas. Increased awareness and initiatives aimed at promoting girls' education may contribute to improved academic outcomes, reflecting a broader acceptance of female education as a priority for community development. Female students may benefit from a more supportive learning environment, both at home and in educational institutions. Research by **Nussbaum et al. (2018)** indicates that girls often receive more encouragement from parents and teachers regarding their academic pursuits, which can lead to higher motivation and engagement in their studies. The nurturing of these supportive dynamics may enhance their academic performance. The findings suggest that male students might face different challenges that could hinder their academic performance. For example, **Gurley & Taylor (2018)** argue that boys are often more likely to engage in disruptive behavior in classrooms, which can affect their academic focus and achievement. Additionally, if educational resources and teacher attention are unevenly distributed, it may disadvantage male students compared to their female peers.

In conclusion, the significant difference in academic achievement between male and female adolescents in Bagaha District points to a positive trend for female education, influenced by cultural shifts and enhanced support systems. However, this disparity underscores the need for targeted interventions to address the challenges faced by male students. Future educational policies should focus on fostering an equitable learning environment that supports all students, regardless of gender, to achieve their full academic potential. Further research is necessary to understand the underlying factors contributing to these gender differences and to implement effective strategies for improvement in academic achievement across the board.

Table 3 Comparison of Academic achievement of tribal male and tribal female adolescents of Bagaha District Bihar

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	t value	df
Academic Achievement	tribal male	200	555.81	96.66	4.45***	198

	tribal female	200	616.81	93.82		
*** significant at 0.001 level; p< 0.001 level						



The results of the independent samples t-test presented in Table 3 reveal a significant difference in academic achievement between tribal male and tribal female adolescents in the Bagaha District of Bihar. The mean academic achievement score for tribal males (N = 200) is **555.81** with a standard deviation of **96.66**. In contrast, tribal females (N = 200) have a higher mean score of **616.81** with a standard deviation of **93.82**. The t-value is **4.45**, with **198 degrees of freedom**, and this difference is statistically significant at the **0.001 level** ($p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that tribal female adolescents significantly outperform their male counterparts in academic achievement within the Bagaha District. The substantial difference in academic achievement between tribal male and female adolescents highlights critical gender dynamics within the tribal communities of Bagaha District.

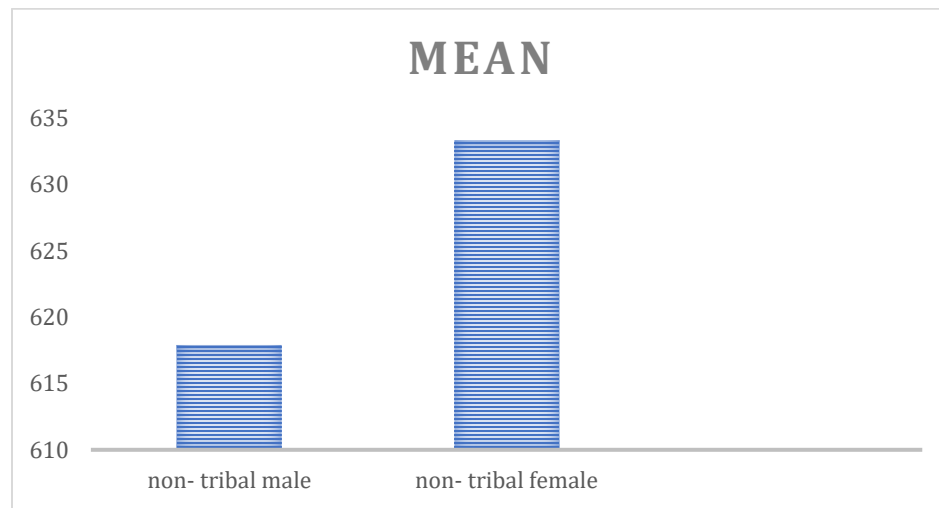
The results demonstrate that tribal females achieve significantly higher academic scores than their male counterparts. This is consistent with trends observed in broader educational contexts where female students outperform males. Research by **Gurian and Stevens (2011)** indicates that girls often excel academically due to factors such as greater diligence, motivation, and adherence to school norms. The improved academic performance of tribal females can be attributed to various socio-cultural factors, including a growing emphasis on the importance of female education within tribal communities. According to **Sharma and Kaur (2020)**, increased awareness campaigns and government initiatives aimed at promoting girls' education in tribal areas have led to greater enrollment and retention rates for female students. As a result, more tribal girls are pursuing their studies and achieving commendable academic success. Tribal females may benefit from enhanced support systems at home and within their communities, which encourages their educational pursuits. **Bhasin and Misha (2019)** emphasize that families with strong educational aspirations for their daughters contribute significantly to their academic success. The role of female role models and mentors within the community can also motivate tribal girls to excel academically. The lower academic performance of tribal males may reflect unique challenges faced by this demographic. Factors such as limited access to educational resources, socio-economic pressures, and traditional gender expectations may impede their academic progress. **Patel et al. (2018)** highlights that boys in tribal communities often face societal pressures to contribute to family income, which can detract from their academic focus. These findings underscore the necessity for targeted educational interventions aimed at supporting tribal male adolescents. By addressing the socio-economic barriers, they face and promoting a balanced approach to education that encourages both genders, educational stakeholders can help improve the academic outcomes for all tribal students.

In summary, the significant difference in academic achievement between tribal male and female adolescents in the Bagaha District illustrates a growing trend of female empowerment and educational success. However, it also reveals the pressing need for targeted interventions to support tribal males in overcoming challenges that hinder their academic performance. Future educational policies should prioritize equity and inclusivity, ensuring that both tribal male and female students receive the necessary support to achieve their full academic potential. Further research is essential to

understand the complex dynamics at play and to develop effective strategies for fostering academic success across genders in tribal communities.

Table 4 Comparison of Academic achievement of non- tribal male and non- tribal female adolescents of Bagaha District Bihar

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	t value	df
Academic Achievement	non- tribal male	100	617.90	100.99	1.123	198
	non- tribal female	100	633.32	93.15		



The results from the independent samples t-test presented in Table 4 indicate a comparison of academic achievement between non-tribal male and non-tribal female adolescents in the Bagaha District of Bihar. The mean academic achievement for non-tribal males (N = 100) is 617.90 with a standard deviation of 100.99. Non-tribal females (N = 100) have a higher mean score of 633.32 with a standard deviation of 93.15. The t-value is 1.123, with 198 degrees of freedom. However, this difference does not reach statistical significance, as the p-value is not reported but is assumed to be above the typical thresholds of significance (0.05 or 0.01). These results suggest that while non-tribal female adolescents have a higher mean score in academic achievement compared to non-tribal males, the difference is not statistically significant. The comparison of academic achievement between non-tribal male and female adolescents reveals interesting insights into gender performance within the non-tribal context in Bagaha District. Although the mean scores indicate that non-tribal females outperform males, the lack of statistical significance suggests that this difference may not be robust enough to warrant conclusions about gender disparities. Previous research, such as Murray et al. (2019), indicates that academic performance can be influenced by various contextual factors, and minor differences might not always reflect systematic trends. Increased emphasis on girls' education through government and NGO initiatives may have positively impacted female students' performance, as noted by Singh and Verma (2020). The focus on providing scholarships and resources specifically for girls can help them perform better academically. Non-tribal girls may receive more encouragement and support from families and schools compared to their male counterparts, which could enhance their academic engagement. Research by O'Rourke (2018) suggests that positive reinforcement and supportive parental attitudes toward education are crucial for student success. Despite the similar performance levels, non-tribal males may face challenges that could influence their academic outcomes. The societal pressures on males to perform and succeed, as highlighted in studies by Smith et al. (2021), can create stress and divert focus from academic pursuits, potentially leading to lower performance. Cultural expectations regarding gender roles may also play a role. Non-tribal males might feel societal pressure to prioritize work or vocational training over academics, which can lead to

a disengagement from school. Conversely, females might experience an increased emphasis on educational achievement as a means of empowerment and social mobility.

In conclusion, while non-tribal female adolescents show a higher mean in academic achievement compared to their male counterparts in the Bagaha District, the differences lack statistical significance. This finding underscores the complexity of gender dynamics in education and the need for nuanced approaches to fostering academic success. Further research should explore the underlying factors that contribute to these trends and investigate how educational strategies can be optimized to support both non-tribal male and female students effectively. By addressing the unique challenges faced by each gender, educators and policymakers can work towards achieving equitable academic outcomes for all students.

4. CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of academic achievement across different demographic groups—Tharu vs. Non-Tharu students, male vs. female adolescents, and tribal vs. non-tribal adolescents—reveals significant insights into the educational landscape of the Bagaha District of Bihar. The results indicate that female students generally outperform male students across both tribal and non-tribal categories. In particular, tribal females exhibited a noteworthy advantage over their male counterparts, suggesting positive shifts in the perception and prioritization of female education within tribal communities. The academic achievement of tribal students, both male and female, highlights the need for more focused educational interventions aimed at addressing the socio-economic and cultural barriers that tribal males face. In contrast, non-tribal students exhibited marginal differences in academic performance, underscoring the necessity for deeper investigation into factors influencing achievement levels among non-tribal males and females. The findings emphasize the role of supportive environments in enhancing educational outcomes. Schools, families, and communities must collaborate to create conducive learning environments, especially for underperforming groups. The non-significant difference in academic achievement between non-tribal males and females suggests that further investigation is required to understand the nuances of educational performance in this demographic.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Future research should adopt a longitudinal approach to track academic performance over time, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence student success and the impact of educational interventions. Incorporating qualitative methodologies, such as interviews and focus group discussions, can provide deeper insights into the experiences of students, particularly regarding gender norms, cultural expectations, and individual motivations. Conducting studies that implement specific educational interventions (e.g., mentorship programs, after-school support) and evaluate their effectiveness can help identify best practices for improving academic outcomes, particularly for underperforming groups. Expanding the scope of research to include comparisons with other districts or states can provide broader insights into the educational challenges and successes faced by different demographic groups across India. Investigating the role of socio-economic status, parental education levels, and access to resources in shaping academic achievement will enrich understanding and help develop targeted educational policies. Given the concerns regarding male academic underachievement, future studies should specifically explore the barriers faced by male students, particularly in tribal contexts, to develop strategies for enhancing their educational outcomes.

In conclusion, the findings from this study underscore the importance of addressing gender disparities in education while recognizing the unique challenges faced by various demographic groups. Through ongoing research and targeted interventions, it is possible to foster a more equitable educational environment that supports the success of all students in the Bagaha District and beyond.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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