

Challenges and Promoting Factors for Tribal Girls in Vocational Education

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Abstract

This research paper purely focused on the importance of vocational education and training programs specifically for tribal girls in India with a particular objective of its role in enhancing economic independence and promoting self-sufficiency in woman. It also highlighted multiple barriers, like social, cultural, administrative, and economical, in accessing the vocational education which affects the participation, retention. At the same time the study positions vocational education as a transformative tool to address gender disparities, especially among marginalized tribal communities. Despite under skill India mission and initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Koshal Vikas Yojana, and 14000 ITI's, the enrolment in ITI is significantly low (25% as per skill India 2023 report). With this concerns NEP aimed to 50% participation in vocational education. Applying a qualitative approach and drawing on focused group discussions from various tribal girls, this paper reveals the complex issues affecting girls' participation in vocational education through their lived experiences, aspirations and challenges they encountered in accessing the program. The research also identifies key promoting factors that could enhance the engagement and success of tribal girls in VET programs, including localized support systems, inclusive policies, community awareness, and culturally sensitive pedagogies. In addition to this, the study presents potential strategies to support girls on vocational training opportunities.

Keywords: Tribal, gender disparities, vocational education, self-sufficient, economic independence

INTRODUCTION

G20 has marked alarm for gender disparities in many countries [1]. Woman empowerment program is at mission mode in several countries [2]. Education was considered as the most powerful way to achieve this empowerment [3].

Non-employability among educated youths and paucity in highly skilled workforce in India suggested that the higher education is not useful in creating skilled workforce [4]. Moreover, the education is not useful in identification of skills and capacity of students. NEP-2020 has found out a way of implementing vocational education from secondary stage [5]. Vocational education and training are the key to promote individuals' economic independence and self-sufficiency, thereby adds to the country's economic health [6]. Training provided under the vocational education foster skills and provides opportunities for employment [7].

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As per skill India report 2023, India has registered only 25% youths enrolled under vocational education which is very small in numbers as per other countries [8] and in order to remove these complexities skill India mission is launched under which various centres for skill development are established like “Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra”, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and 14,953 Industrial Training Institutions (ITIs) [9].

By 2025, NEP reimagined 50% students have exposure to vocational courses [5]. It is also observed that there are many reasons beside poverty, like lack of quality education, guidance, support and social disparities, education for marginalized people is expensive and out of reach of their wallets and thus poverty leads them to apply for vocational education [10].

It is also noticed that society has some perceptions about vocational courses [11]. It is their secondary or back up plan if they were unable to achieve success in academics [11]. The society has low desirability in taking admissions in vocational course as they feel it represents poor academic performance and poverty and low social status [12].

The social status of the beneficiaries of the training given by the MoSDE report indicated the category of working class [9].

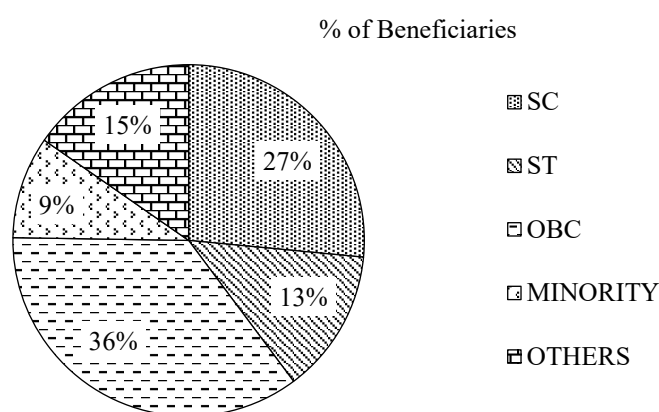


Figure 1. Percentage of beneficiaries of vocational education.

As shown in Figure 1, Maximum 35% (OBC) students are interested in vocational education [13]. The broadened views are the need of the time for India [14]. Gender disparities are observed and reported repeatedly [15]. Hindustan Times (2023, July 26) has published an article revealing India spend report 2023, that “36.1% of men and 18.6% of women aged 18–59 had ever received vocational training, and this gap has increased over the years [16].”

Regarding gender inequality, (ASER 2023) reported, “girls make up a smaller percentage of young people enrolled in vocational training or other courses (4.5%) than boys (6.8%). Shorter courses are more likely to be taken by girls who are enrolled in vocational training or other courses. The institutions that young people choose to attend for vocational training do not significantly differ based on gender” [17].

The gender gap in enrolment of females in vocational courses varies from district to district, it is highest Himachal Pradesh and in lowest Meghalaya and in Maharashtra female enrolments are more than male enrolments [18]. This highlighted the success of Maharashtra in empowerment of woman and the success of system to eliminate gender disparities.

The annual report of MSDE 2022–23, clarifies the has reported that in JSS program the participation of the female (83%) is higher than male (17%), as shown in Figures 2, 3, and 5.

(ii) Gender-wise coverage							
Enrolled			Assessed				
Male	Female	Transgender	Total	Male	Female	Transgender	Total
76,573	3,85,287	199	4,62,059	75,393	3,82,057	199	4,57,649

Figure 2. Gender wise participation in JSS program.

The following table will elaborate the JSS beneficiaries by age group clearly.

FY\Age group	15–18 years	19–25 years	26–35 years	Above 35 years	Total
2022–23	65879	207582	142961	73901	490331

Figure 3. Age group of beneficiaries of JSS program.

The educational status of beneficiaries of JSS below indicated the interest of students in vocational courses better than higher education.

Non-literates	Neo-literates	Rudimentary level	12th dropouts	Total
21881	91826	260590	116033	490331

Figure 4. Educational status of beneficiaries of JSS program.

Overall vocational education has not gained popularity, and status among Indian communities.

Objective

The study has undertaken with the main three objectives; they are as follows:

- To study the awareness level about vocational education among females.
- To identify the challenges and promotional factors in the enrolments in vocational education.
- To suggest potential strategies to improve female participation in vocational education.

Methodology

To serve the purpose tribal district Chandrapur has been considered for the study.

Population of the Study

510 female students from 52 institutes were purposefully selected for the focus group Discussion. (10 students from each institute).

Research Tool

Self-made questionnaire was developed and verified by split half method.

Data Collection

Data were collected from by face-to-face interactions with the students.

Pointes were noted at the time of communication. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected while interaction.

Data Processing

Quantitative data was tabulated and analysed in percentage scale and presented using bar diagrams and line graphs.

Qualitative data was analyzed on content basis finding the same themes, patterns and categories in the statements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocational education plays a vital role in woman empowerment. A self-reliant woman not only enjoys freedom but also create free environment for another woman [19, 20]. According to PLFS 2022, the literacy rate among tribes is 72.1% with a wide gender gap and mong the marginalized community tribal community is the most deprived and backward [21].

“Females are not aware of training programs are being offered in their neighbourhood [9]. Alternatively, if the candidates intend to pursue a program, they do not have the information about the nearest training centres offering this program”.

“Tribal Education: A Quest for Integration in the Regional Mainstream [22]” and in (1994) “Social Background of Tribal Girl Students [23]” addressed the unique challenges faced by tribal communities, particularly girls, in accessing quality education while exploring the integration of tribal education into the broader regional context, and Focused on examines how socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of tribal girl students influence their educational experiences and access to vocational training.

study on the status of vocational education explained that the percentage of girls participating in vocational education at+2 levels was much lesser than that of boys. The problem of girls’ participation in vocational courses was not only of inequality in numbers but also in the types of vocational courses made available to or opted by the girls [24].

need of offering more rural-based vocational courses for enhancing individual employability and reducing the mismatch between demand and supply of middle-level skilled manpower in rural areas [25].

hindrances in achieving the objectives of vocational education. The identified hindrances were reported to be the mismatch between the offered courses and the demand of society; the selection of students for vocational education was not based on their ability, aptitude, and interest Hence, the absence of a uniform pattern in selecting students into a vocational stream; insufficient availability of textbooks and instructional materials in all regional languages; shortage of qualified and trained teachers and inadequate allotment of financial assistance, proved to be major hindrances in availing vocational courses[26].

“Gender dimensions of vocational interest amongst school children in tribal areas: a study of Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh”, observed that the gender dimensions play an important role in the vocational interests of students. There is a significant difference in vocational interests of boys and girls for agriculture, executive and household in tribal areas [27].

study titled “Attitude of Principals of Haryana towards Learning Outcome Based vocational education under NSQF”. It was concluded from the study that the principals were very positive towards the implementation of a learning-outcome-based-vocational education programme under NSQF and they considered it very effective and relevant [28].

“Tribal Education in India: Issues and Challenges” investigated into various issues, like access and participation, infrastructure and resources, including discussions on vocational education and the specific hurdles faced by tribal girls [29].

“Tribal Education in India” compiled complicated challenges in tribal education, with specific sections dedicated to the educational status of tribal girls and the role of vocational training in empowering them [30].

poor literacy levels and highly prevalent patriarchal tendencies along with lack of educational facility and lack of support from the administration related to education and skill development facility prevents Jharkhand tribal women [31].

obstacles such as illiteracy, illness, and low paid jobs. Valentine, Sinduria, Vincentia [32], Lugun (2024) focused on low income and poverty levels and pointed out that Vocational education will enable Adivasis to develop skills [33].

Illiteracy and exploitation by middlemen restrict tribal women in Jharkhand to develop, to get education and skills required to gain income and support them financially [34].

Dr. Sitansu S. Jena, Former Chairman NIOS, discussed the major issues and challenges facing the vocational education system in India. Some of the critical concerns in vocational education includes mismatch between demand and supply limited scope for vertical mobility [35, 36].

OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

Finding from the data collected from field visits and interview with beneficiary's revealed following status.

- There are 53 ITIs in the district out of which only one at district level is reserved for girls (woman ITI) with hostel facility.
- There are 7 tribal ITIs in the district and two residential school ITIs (Table 1).
- Gender disparities in enrolment are clearly visible and seek attention. On an average only 31.19% females are enrolled in it is field in last 10 years (In last decade, the Average).

Table 1. Gender wise enrolments in ITIs in %.

India overall category	Chandrapur overall category	Chandrapur ST category
14.45%	19.98%	31.29%

A big gender disparity is observed in the enrolment /admission data in the ITI field. The national level average enrolment is 14.45% for overall categories, whereas it is 19.98% in district, and for ST admissions, it is 31.29% which is much better and improving also.

The low participation demands further investigation, develop awareness campaign especially at remote villages.

- The decadal data has shown the improving interest of female in this field.in 1981 only 8.24% females were enrolled in ITIs, now in 2021, 31.01% enrolments are recorded (Table 2).

Table 2. Decadal data of VTCs.

Year	Boys	Girls	Total	% of students
1981	37	0	37	8.24
1991	28	0	28	11.71
2001	267	31	298	17.23
2011	1226	274	1500	11.74
2021	1248	561	1809	31.01

The improving enrolments are the results of the initiatives taken by MoTA for establishing tribal ITIs (Table 3).

Table 3. Year wise and gender wise admissions in ITI.

Year	Male	Female
2014-15	275	82
2015-16	455	87
2016-17	54	43
2017-18	458	106
2018-19	552	118
2019-20	373	133
2020-21	376	119
2021-22	249	122
2022-23	434	163

Source: <https://www.ncvtmis.gov.in>

The Table shows the male and female admissions in tribal ITIs, the gender disparity in enrolments is visible clearly. Male shows highly fluctuations over the years whereas female enrolments are increasing indicating possible improvements in the outreach efforts in the program. Further research is required to identify the low participation of female admissions in VC.

The outcome of the trained candidates can be visible in the following Table.

Apprenticeship won by students also shows the gender disparities at high level (Table 4).

Table 4. Male female apprenticeship appeared data.

Year	Male	Female
2019–20	31	13
2020–21	73	21
2021–22	148	38
2022–23	143	37
2023–24	145	57
2024–25	5	1
Total	545	167

The data shows the gender disparity in applying for apprenticeships. All the enrolments, admissions, and application data shows the gender disparity, especially. 76.54% of males and only 23.45% of females got apprenticeships in the last 6 years. The female participation observed is very low and needs to be increased to improve the status.

It is essential to identify relevant courses and opportunities for women participation in skill development and entrepreneurship (Table 5).

We need to develop awareness among females about taking steps in entrepreneurship.

Maximum youths are applied for short time courses and females are also following the same path. Only 8% of females are applied for more than 12 months course.

Table 5. Duration of courses.

Enrolment status	3 months	3–6 months	12 months	<12 months	Other
Male	29%	26%	24%	18%	6%
female	41%	24%	20%	8%	7%
Undergraduate	36%	18%	21%	15%	10%

Only 12% young females are interested in white collar jobs, like police, teacher, Anganwadi worker, Asha worker, nursing, forest guard, data operator, banking, government jobs, etc., as their primary aspiration. 34% students are selecting vocational courses.

Among 34% Girls, interested in sewing and beauty parlour work. They work and earn while doing household chores. Many have not decided to take it as a career but part time work. Many girls have shown passion to pursue vocations, like sewing and cooking, to be able to make their own clothes and to cook at home, open alongside pursuing their primary career goals (Tables 6 and 7).

Challenges in application process revealed by the respondents are mentioned in the following Table.

Table 6. Common challenges in application process.

S.N.	Particulars/Items	Yes
1	Parents unwilling to send in vocational courses	55%
2	Unawareness about trade to select	74%
3	Unawareness about market demands	81%
4	Unawareness about future after certification	92%
5	Unawareness about any financial support except scholarship	100%

xi. Feedback about the access for application/process is given in the following Table.

65% of the respondents reported facing any problems in obtaining information about the educational schemes, 60% faced any problems while applying for the scheme, 40% encountered challenges in arranging the required documents or enclosures, and 100% reported incurring expenditure for processing. This suggests that information dissemination channels are ineffective, and participants are not well-informed about the available schemes, there is a lack of a smooth and user-friendly application process, the documentation process is not well-communicated and manageable for the participants. Costs are no associated with the application process.

Table 7. Feedback about the access for application/process in %.

S.N.	Particulars/Items	Yes
1	Face any Problems in getting information about the schemes	65%
2	Face any problem while applying for the Scheme?	60%
3	Problems in arranging required documents/enclosures	40%
4	Had expenditure for processing	100%

Feedback about the economic benefits collected from respondent is given in following Table (Table 8).

Table 8. Feedback about the economic benefits.

S.N.	Particulars/Items	Yes	No
1	Getting all facilities covered under the scheme	100	0
2	Sufficient scholarship amount	0	100
3	Sufficient stipend	0	100
4	Has private expenditure on education	100	0

100% of participants reported receiving all facilities covered by the programme, demonstrating the inclusive and comprehensive character of the educational programmes that attend to many facets of the demands of the pupils.

Nobody of the respondents said they had gotten a big enough scholarship. This begs the question of how much money the scholarship offers are really worth, implying that participants feel the existing scholarship sum is inadequate.

Every participant acknowledged having paid for their schooling privately. This indicates that students and their families still must pay extra expenses even with the advantages of the educational programme.

All the responders said that there is a chance of dropping out without the facilities and educational programmes. This highlights the critical role these programmes play in keeping pupils in school and averting dropouts.

xiv. Impact of the vocational education: The following figure has given all the Impact of the vocational education.

In conclusion, there are worries regarding the alleged insufficiency of the scholarship amounts even if the educational programmes seem to cover different facilities very well. The affirmation of the private funding for education emphasises the need of further funding.

The fact that the programmes reducing dropouts are universally acknowledged emphasises how crucial they are to encouraging ST community youngsters to pursue their education. Taking care of the alleged inadequacies in scholarship amounts might improve the overall effect of these programmes on the financial stability of students.

CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING THE VOCATIONAL COURSE

The following figure has given all the challenges in accessing the vocational courses (Figures 6).

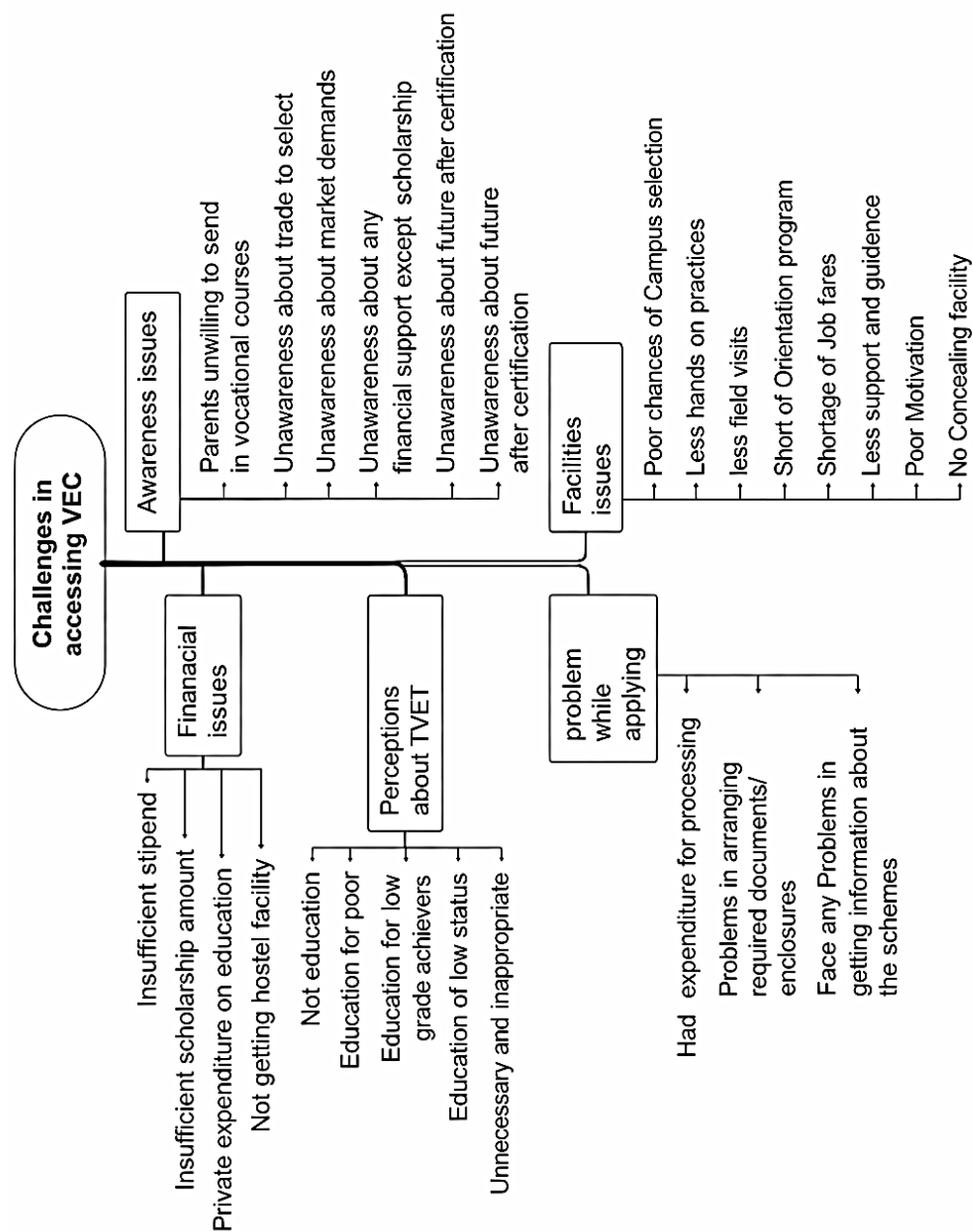


Figure 5. Challenges in accessing the vocational course.

Impact of the Vocational Education

The following figure has given all the Impact of the vocational education.

Overall, the impact of the scheme is positive and there is room for improvements in raising aspirations for further studies to enhance skill.

The above figures pointed out that majority of respondents are satisfied with the facilities provided in the tribal ITI. Very few respondents dissatisfied with the facilities provided. The reasons behind the dissatisfaction need to investigate.

Majority of respondents are dissatisfied with the stipend. The amount of stipend is very less for students. It is the room for improvement in the scheme, for better implantation of the scheme.

All participants (100%) agreed that the system has positive effect on attendance, financial assistance, reducing dropout and education Inspired for being self-sufficient, Raised aspiration for campus selection.

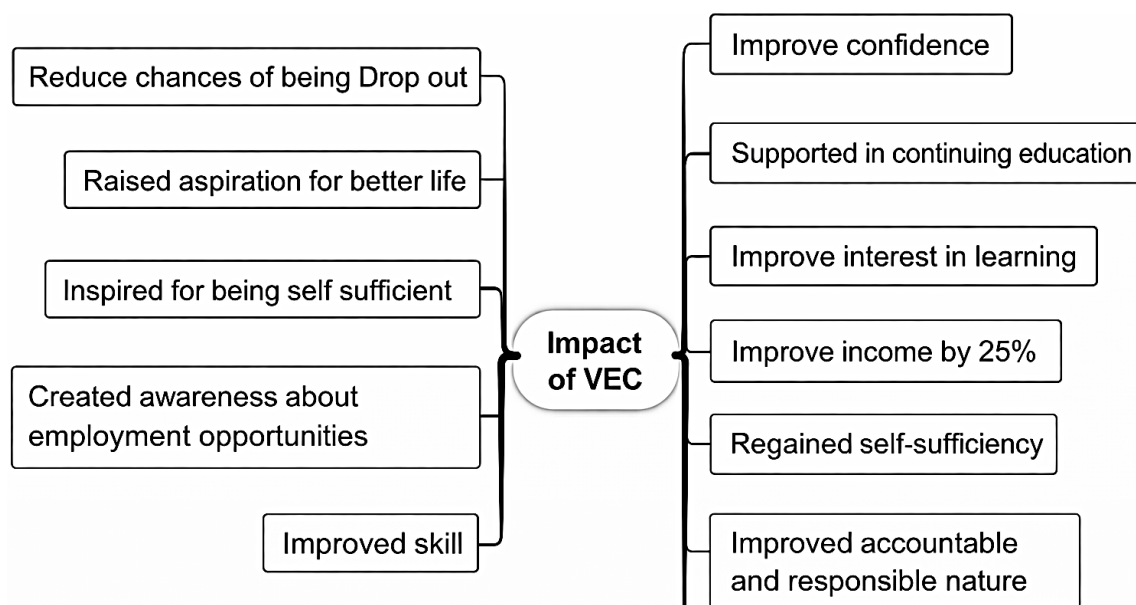


Figure 6. Impact of the vocational education.

Suggestions

Following suggestions are provided to improve the access for tribal girls.

- Tribal women have their own identity as a tribal woman. Their features are their identity. Vocational education can improve their identity by adding words empowered tribal woman.
- Cultural integration in vocational education, like art, craft, weaving, and making, are the basic programs that can easily transform the lives of the poor tribal woman. These kinds of projects ran in many districts and are successful too. Hence, the one step forward initiatives, like introducing marketing, advertising, and online selling in vocational courses, needs to be started.
- Career guidance portals should be developed in partnership with the government and the private sector.
- Role models are essential to be present before students.
- A strong culture of career, concealing and guidance should be established in each secondary school.
- New courses related with market demand needs to be started in ITIs.
- Narrow thinking like small earnings,
- Side business, time pass business, business for hobby should be changed by creating awareness.

The broad-minded thoughts, like earnings for statuses, earning for better living, earning for self-sufficiency, and earning for career”, should be introduced in awareness campaign.

- The limited learning of parlour, sewing, embroidery and jewellery making should be broadened with the addition of marketing skills, entrepreneurship and advertising so that the household business will grow and compete with each other.
- To improve the learning environment and develop interest in learning, some of the methods are advocated, like to include activity-based methods, such as projects, seminars, experiments, real-life learning, project competitions, learning by doing, by awareness rally, learning from the community, etc.
- Joyful learning can take place by connecting local talent with the national policy through internships. Vocational programs should prioritize skills directly tied to local and regional job markets such as agriculture, craftsmanship, or hospitality. By aligning skills training with the needs of the local economy, graduates will be more likely to secure jobs upon completion of their programs.
- Real-life role models should be introduced with the orientation programs, awareness program and supporting programs.
- Maintain records of the employed students to inspire the newly admitted students. It is found that 96.2% woman is not in education, employment, or training segment and 96.6% have had no formal vocational training.
- 42% of these women are below the age of 30 and 67% live in rural areas are working for very low wages due to lack of training or are self-employed, must be given access to training that will help them earn a better livelihood.
- Self-employed women and entrepreneurs need to have access to training that is directed towards helping them grow their businesses.
- TVET courses need to be designed keeping these underserved groups and their needs in mind.
- Tribal girls are suffering from low self-esteem. They Experiences of discrimination and marginalization causing them to doubt their own abilities and potential. This self-doubt prevents them from pursuing opportunities in vocational education or continuing their training when obstacles arise. The attitude of teachers and society needs to change by leadership development training programs.
- Many tribal girls feel isolated from their peers, particularly in vocational programs that can discourage participation and diminish motivation, leading to higher dropout rates. Exposures, field works, projects and other engaging methods need to be applied in the teaching learning sessions.
- Students demanded increase in scholarship amount and stipend. The financial support provided is insufficient for students and is not inspiring them for applying the course. Providing targeted financial assistance specifically for tribal girls can alleviate some of the economic burdens linked to vocational education. Scholarships can serve as key motivators for families, influencing their decisions to permit daughters to pursue education.
- Involvement of tribal leaders, families, and local organizations in the educational process promotes a girls' education and support for girls' education can be cultivated through inviting them in the regular meetings.
- Hostel provisions in tribal ITIs, transporting facilities, will surely improve the enrolments and can bring change in parents' attitude,
- Establishing mentorship programs, forming support groups and introducing sharing, caring and together growing strategies adds to the promotion of vocational education among girls.

CONCLUSION

Holding a Job, getting employment, having Economic status are the signs of empowerment. Being Self-reliance through earning is the only marking of empowerment for woman. Vocational education offers an easy way for tribal girls; however, challenges are persisting and hinder their success. To eliminate these barriers, a strong system, policy and policy maker with positive intentions are necessary.

Opportunities to present the talent, skill and culture are the only way to make the vocational education successful. Interesting jobs, attractive salary and better living conditions are the expectations of school going children and their parents.

A safe and secure learning environment, financial support and encouraging mentors can uplift the position of tribal woman. Enhancing the participation of tribal girls in vocational education will lead to breaking the cycle of poverty and gender inequality within these communities. Effective collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, and community members, will be vital in ensuring that the ambitions of tribal girls are met with the support and resources they need to succeed.

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