

Psycho-Social Challenges Faced by De-notified and Nomadic Tribe Students in Government-Aided Residential Ashram Schools in Satara District

Bhaishailendra Laxman Mane

Assistant Professor

Yashwantrao Chavan School of Social Work, Jakatwadi, Satara

Abstract Children from De-notified and Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) studying in government-aided Ashram schools often face multi-layered psychological and social barriers. Despite access to free residential schooling, they are hindered by trauma, identity crisis, peer discrimination, lack of emotional support, and sociocultural isolation. This 2015 study investigates psycho-social challenges affecting DNT students in Satara's Ashram schools. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, it presents data-driven insights and real-life case studies.

Keywords: De-notified and Nomadic Tribes, DNT students, psycho-social issues, Ashram schools, stigma, trauma, inclusive education,

Introduction The De-notified and Nomadic Tribes of India, once labeled 'criminal tribes' under British law, continue to face social exclusion even decades after notification. In Maharashtra, government-aided Ashram schools were established to provide residential education to children from marginalized communities including DNTs. While infrastructure and academics have seen incremental improvements, the psycho-social well-being of DNT students remains largely unaddressed.

These children often grow up in disrupted family environments, experience migration, economic instability, and live with internalized stigma. In Ashram school settings, they encounter alienation, peer bullying, and a lack of psychological support systems. This study focuses on psycho-social issues among DNT students in 2015 in Satara district.

Review of Literature

Chakrabarti (2012) noted that institutional education models often fail to respond to the psychological needs of tribal students. Radhakrishna (2001) highlighted the historical burden of stigma carried by DNTs. Joshi and Pawar (2013) discussed the absence of structured counseling in rural schools.

The NCERT report (2014) stressed the importance of psychosocial care in residential institutions, while UNESCO (2013) advocated for trauma-informed pedagogy in education for marginalized communities. State-

level reports by the Maharashtra Tribal Department also pointed to increasing behavioral dropouts among Ashram school students.

Objectives

1. To examine the psychological and emotional challenges faced by DNT students.
2. To analyze peer interactions and their impact on mental well-being.
3. To assess the availability of counseling and emotional support mechanisms.
4. To recommend a psycho-social intervention framework.

Methodology

Research Design: Convergent parallel design

Study Area and Sampling

The study was conducted in three government-aided Ashram schools located in: Jakatwadi, Upali, Padegaon. These schools were selected purposively based on their significant enrolment of DNT students and their geographic and demographic representation within Satara district.

Participants: 50 DNT students, 9 teachers,

Tools: Interview schedule, behavior observation checklist, self-reported emotion scale

Analysis: Content analysis, descriptive statistics

Table 1: Emotional Challenges Reported by DNT Students

Type of Emotional Challenge	Number of Students (out of 50)	Percentage (%)
Frequent sadness, anxiety, or fear	18	36%
Trauma symptoms (nightmares, withdrawal, aggression)	9	18%

Table 1 on Emotional Challenges shows that 36% of students reported frequent sadness, anxiety, or fear, and 18% showed trauma symptoms like nightmares and withdrawal. These data points confirm that emotional distress

is significant among DNT students, reflecting internalized stigma, unstable home environments, and lack of coping mechanisms.

Table 2: Peer Relationship Issues among DNT Students

Peer-related Issue	Number of Students Affected	Percentage (%)
Bullying due to caste/community origin	21	42%
Exclusion from group activities by peers	12	24%

Table 2 on Peer Relationship Issues shows that 42% of students experienced bullying based on caste or community, and 24% were excluded from peer group activities.

Table 3: Program Coverage and Accessibility – Psycho-Social Support

Scheme/Program	Component of Counseling	Coverage in Satara	Remarks
SSA (IE component)	Minimal	Partial	No focus on trauma
KGBV	Focus on girls' access	Not applicable	No mental health aid
Bal Sarakshan Yojana	Counseling (theoretical)	Nil	Not implemented

There is a critical gap in mental health and trauma-focused counseling in educational and child welfare schemes in Satara. While policies may mention inclusive education or access for girls, practical implementation is either weak, absent, or ignores emotional and psychological support — particularly needed for vulnerable and marginalized children. This calls for urgent integration of trauma-informed and child-sensitive counseling services across all programs.

Table 4: Consolidated Overview of Key Psycho-Social Challenges

Category	Key Issue	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Emotional Challenges	Sadness, anxiety, or fear	18	36%
	Trauma symptoms	9	18%

Category	Key Issue	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Peer Relationship Issues	Bullying due to caste/community	21	42%
	Exclusion from group activities	12	24%
Identity & Self-Esteem	Perceived as 'different' by peers/teachers	30	60%
	Reluctant to disclose tribal identity	Majority	Not quantified

The data reveals deep-seated emotional and social struggles rooted in discrimination, marginalization, and identity suppression. The high levels of emotional distress, bullying, and identity-based exclusion underscore the urgent need for trauma-informed counseling, teacher sensitization, and inclusive school practices. Without intervention, these challenges can lead to long-term psychological harm and educational disengagement.

Insight from School Staff

Teachers in Ashram schools acknowledged a significant gap in their capacity to support students' emotional needs. Most lacked formal training in child psychology or trauma-informed approaches, often misinterpreting behavioral symptoms as indiscipline. The pressure to meet academic targets further restricted their ability to provide individualized emotional care. As a result, many students' psycho-social issues went unrecognized and unaddressed.

Recommendations

1. Appointment of trained counselors in each Ashram school under the Tribal Welfare Department.
2. Training for the teachers in child psychology and trauma-informed approaches.
3. Develop peer sensitization modules to reduce caste/community-based discrimination.
4. Partner with NGOs and mental health institutions for regular school visits.
5. Establish confidential grievance redressal and emotional reporting mechanisms.
6. Create safe spaces for student expression (e.g., clubs, circles, art therapy).

Conclusion Educational equity must extend beyond access and infrastructure—it must address the emotional and psychological needs of marginalized children. DNT students face invisible wounds that affect their capacity to learn and grow. Government-aided Ashram schools must adopt a psycho-social lens in their planning and execution. Sustainable inclusion demands that we not only teach the child but also heal them.

References

1. Chakrabarti, A. (2012). Education, Exclusion and the State. Routledge.
2. Radhakrishna, M. (2001). Dishonoured by History. Orient Blackswan.
3. Joshi, P. & Pawar, S. (2013). Mental Health in Rural Schools. Mumbai: Institute of Rural Studies.
4. NCERT. (2014). Guidelines for Counselling in Schools.
5. UNESCO. (2013). Addressing Trauma in Educational Systems.
6. Government of Maharashtra. (2015). Tribal Development Annual Review.
7. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2015). Child Protection Scheme Reports.

