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Review Article

Evaluating School Readiness Among the Tribal Children of Rajouri District in Early Childhood Years

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ABSTRACT: ***The present study was conducted to assess the school readiness among tribal Gujjar children of Rajouri district in Early Childhood Years. Results revealed that majority of the children were fall in the age group of 3-4 years and belonged to joint families. It showed that most of the children performed at or above average in overall scores of Child Observation Schedule. The chi square analysis indicated no significant difference between the sample of boys and girls. The School Readiness Assessment Test (SRAT) indicated that most children performed at an average level, suggesting that their readiness for school was upright. There was insignificant difference in the level of SRAT among boys and girls. It is important for the child to be equipped with the necessary skills so that they are able to engage and benefit from the curriculum. The study provides valuable insights into the school readiness of Gujjar tribal children, highlighting areas of strength and areas that may requires for school readiness. The findings contribute to the development of programs tailored to enhance the overall readiness of tribal children for formal school readiness.***

KEYWORDS: ***School Readiness, Early Childhood, Education, Tribal Children, Rajouri District, Jammu & Kashmir.***

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood refers to the formative stage of first six years of life, with well- marked sub-stages (conception to birth; birth to three years and three years to six years) having age- specific needs, following the life cycle approach. It is the period of most rapid growth and development and is critical for survival. Growing scientific evidence confirms that there are critical stages in the development of the brain during this period which influence the pathways of physical and mental health, and behaviour throughout the life cycle (MWCD, Govt. of India, 2012).

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) recognized as an important element of education for all globally. This stage is the Foundation of Learning. Therefore, countries have taken it forward rapidly. Recognizing the importance of ECCE, the New National Education Policy 2020 has extended the Right to Education eligibility window from 6-14 years to 3-18 years. But, providing early childhood care and education is one of the many Issues & Challenges. The establishments of ECCE centres in primary schools and the provision of teacher facilities, as well as the design of curricula that are conducive to child care and education, are very difficult.

Investment in Early Childhood Care and Education in National Education Policy 2020 and ensuring its access to all children in the country, flexible, multidisciplinary, play, activity and

discovery-based learning in early childhood care and education the key provisions are to develop an excellent curriculum and pedagogical framework for early childhood education are major provisions in NEP 2020. The Role of the Teacher in the Implementation of the ECCE is crucial. They should make continuous efforts for the skill development of the child and design the curriculum to continue happily (Kumar, 2023).

School readiness refers to whether a child is ready to make an easy and successful transition into school. The term 'preschool readiness' might be used in the same manner in reference to beginning preschool (Kindergarten). School readiness can be actively facilitated with a little forward planning to ensure that children regularly participate in activities that develop the appropriate skills required to help optimal learning when they start school. While many people think of academics (e.g. writing their name, counting to 10, knowing the colors) as the important school readiness skills, school readiness actually refers to a much broader range of skills.

In addition to some academic basics, school readiness skills also include self-care (independent toileting and opening lunch boxes), attention and concentration, physical skills (e.g. having the endurance to sit upright for an entire school day), emotional regulation, language skills and play and social skills. The development of school readiness skills allows school teachers to expand and further develop a child's skills in the specific areas of social interaction, play, language, emotional development, physical skills, literacy and fine motor skills.

Encouraged by research, many nations have committed to the idea that children who attend Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) are more likely to be successful when they start school than those who do not (OECD 2012, 2017). The Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and Goal 4.2 in particular (United Nations, 2015) establish Early Childhood Education (ECE) as a global target in order 'to prepare' children for school and to ensure that they are ready as well as able to 'learn', calling for at least one year of preschool education to be compulsory for all children in all member states. (UNICEF 2019) advocates the impact of quality pre-primary education on completion rates and more successful progress in literacy and mathematical skills in subsequent primary schooling.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF TRIBAL POPULATION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Jammu and Kashmir reside as one of the borderline UT of India and holds an overall population of 1,25,41302 including female population of 59,00640 and male population of 66,40662. The Jammu and Kashmir constitution has announced 12 tribal communities as the Scheduled Tribes. Eight communities such as - Balti, Mon, Bot, Beda, Brookpa, Changpa, Garra, and Purigpa, were given Scheduled Tribes status in 1989; And Sippis, Gujjars, Bakarwals, and Gaddis were identified as the Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution Amendment Act 1991. The Scheduled Tribes constitute 11.9 percent of the entire population of Jammu and Kashmir (Census of India, 2011). In 2011, Rajouri had population of 642,415 of which male and female were 345,351 and 297,064 respectively.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess school readiness of tribal children in early childhood years in following dimensions: Physical, Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Development.
- To compare school readiness of tribal children in context of gender.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample Description

The sample for the study comprised of Gujjar tribal children of Anganwadi centre. The sample consisted of 60 tribal children (30 boys and 30 girls). The sample for the study was selected from 3 Anganwadi centres of three blocks of Rajouri district namely: Planger, Thanamandiand and Panjgrian.

Criteria for sample selection:

- Only tribal gujjar children in the age group of 3-6 years were selected.
- Only those tribal gujjar children who enrolled in tribal Anganwadi centres were selected.

Sampling Technique: Multi Stage sampling technique was used to select the tribal children. In the 1st stage, 3 Anganwadi centres were randomly selected from three blocks of Rajouri District namely: Planger, Thanamandi and Panjgrian. In the second stage, 20 tribal children comprising (10 boys and 10 girls) were purposively selected from each Anganwadi centre.

Tools for the Study

The following tools were used for data collection:

1. Background Information Sheet: A Self-devised interview schedule was used to collect the information from the respondents regarding their age, gender, family type, number of family members etc.
2. School Readiness Assessment Test: School Readiness Assessment Test developed by Dr. Laxmidhar Behera and I.P Gowramma. School Readiness Assessment Test includes Language such as: reading readiness, sentence comprehension, storytelling & reciting rhyme, and listening comprehension; and in Arithmetic and Cognitive such as pre-number concept, sequential thinking, classification skill and space concept etc. and knowledge on general aspects.
3. Child Observation Schedule: Child Observation Schedule developed by Dr. Laxmidhar Behera and I.P Gowramma. Child observation schedule was used for collection of information on the activities demonstrated by the child in the Anganwadi centres. The dimensions of the activities include behaviors (e.g., shares with others, expresses curiosity, asks questions etc.) of the sampled child. The investigator is required to observe each sampled child at the centre as comprehensively and as honestly as possible along the dimensions suggested in this schedule. The behaviours would be observed when the child is in the centre environment and/ or when the investigator is interacting with the child. While noting down the child's behaviour and the situations where the behaviour is observed, the investigator would make a judgement regarding how frequently and intensely the behaviour is shown along the four categories given in the schedule and put a tick mark in the appropriate cell. Any additional remark may be given in the 'remarks' column. (Not at all: 1; To some extent: 2; To a great extent: 3; Almost always: 4) Procedure for Data collection: Data was collected by making visit to tribal Anganwadi centres in Rajouri district. School Readiness Assessment Test and Child Observation Schedule were applied on 60 children (30 boys and 30 girls) to gather required information.

Data Analysis: Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used for data analysis. The raw data was coded and tabulated depending on the kind of information required keeping in view the objectives of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SECTION 1 Background Information:

Table 1 and Figure 1 shows the age of the sample children. It reveals that majority 52% of the respondents comprising 57% boys and 47% girls were fall in the age group of 3-4 years whereas, 48% of the respondents comprising 43% boys and 53% girls were fall in the age group of 5-6 years.

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

Age (in years)	Boys N = 30	%	Girls N = 30	%	Total N = 60	%
3-4 years	17	57%	14	47%	31	52%
5-6 years	13	43%	16	53%	29	48%

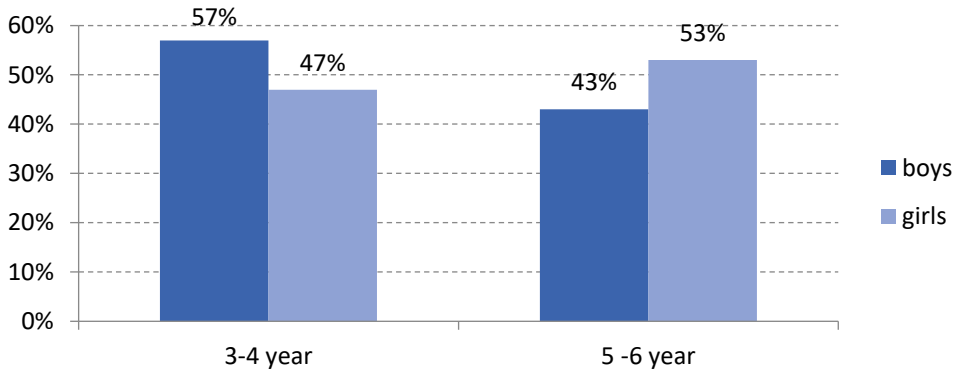

Figure 1: Shows the Age of the Children

Table 2: Type of Family

Family	Boys N = 30	%	Girls N = 30	%	Total N = 60	%
Joint	18	60%	19	63%	37	62%
Nuclear	12	40%	11	37%	23	38%

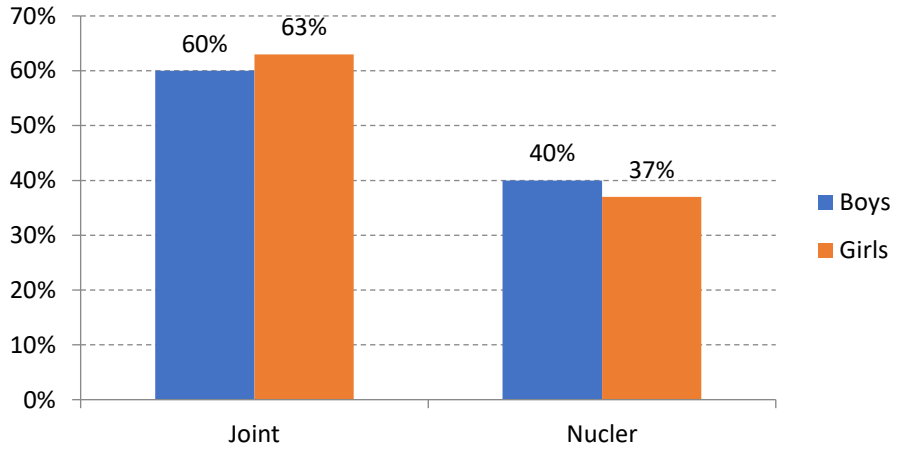

Figure 2: Showing the Type of the Family

Table 2 and Figure 2 depict the type of family of the tribal children. It reveals that majority 62% of the respondents, including (60% boys and 63% girls) were from joint family and remaining 38% of the respondents including (40% boys and 37% girls) were from nuclear family.

SECTION 2 Overall Scores of Child Observation Schedule:

Table 3: Overall Scores of children on Child Observation Schedule

Levels	Boys N = 30	%	Girls N = 30	%	Total	%
(10-20) Below average	2	7%	6	20%	8	13%
(21-30) Average	20	67%	14	47%	34	57%
(31-40) Above average	8	26%	10	33%	18	30%
χ^2 3.281 P- value 193879						

*Not significant at P < 0.05

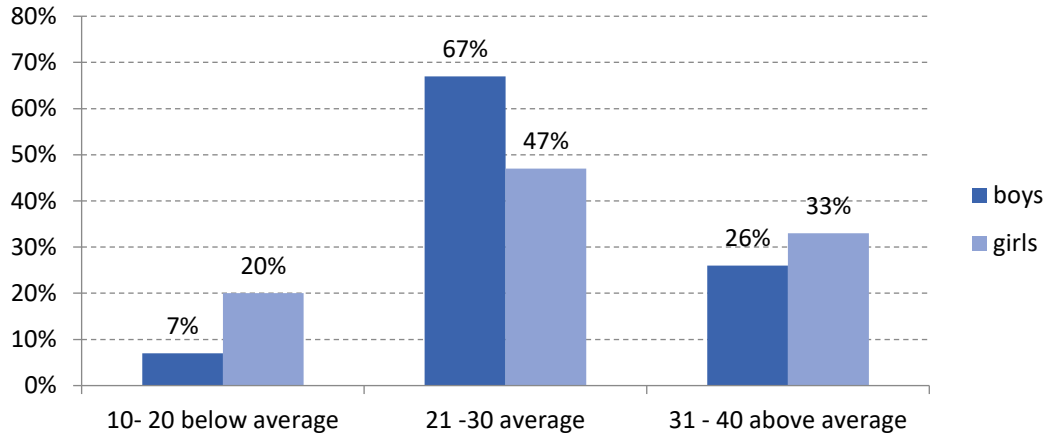

Figure 3: Showing Overall Scores of Children's on Child Observation Schedule

Table 3 and figure 3 reveals that majority 57% of the children comprising (67% boys and 47% girls) performed on an average level in overall scores of Child Observation Schedule. Further table depicts that 30% of the children (33% of the girls and 26% of the boys) were fall on the level of above average and only 13% of the children performed at below average. Statistically, chi square reveals insignificant difference between sample boys and girls.

Table 4: Sharing of play material with other children

Sl.	Frequency and intensity	Boys		Girls		Total	
		N = 30	%	N = 30	%	N = 60	%
1	Not at All	5	17%	6	20%	11	18%
2	To Some Extent	2	7%	6	20%	8	13%
3	Great Extent To	16	53%	8	27%	24	40%
4	Almost always	7	23%	10	33%	17	28%
χ^2	5.287						

*Not significant at p < 0.05

Table 4 reveals the behaviour of sharing of play material with other tribal children. It shows that 40% of the tribal children comprising 53% boys and 27% girls exhibit this behaviour to great extent, followed by 28% of the respondent children, who were fall in the category of almost always, 13% of the children were fall in the category to some extent and only 18% of the tribal children were found to be at the not at all category. Chi square depicts insignificant difference between sample boys and girls.

Table 5: Children Expresses curiosity and asks question to Anganwadi worker

Sl.	Frequency and intensity	Boys		Girls		Total	
		N = 30	%	N = 30	%	N = 60	%
1	Not at All	9	30%	3	10%	12	20%
2	To Some Extent	3	10%	8	27%	11	18%
3	To Great Extent	15	50%	10	33%	25	42%
4	Almost always	3	10%	9	30%	12	20%
χ^2	9.2727						

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 5 reveals that 42% of the children comprising 50% boys and 33% girls exhibit this behaviour to great extent and 20% of the children fall in the category of almost always. This suggests that majority of the tribal children express curiosity and asks questions and children's questioning promotes cognitive development. Further table reveals that 20% of the children were found to be at the not at all category and it indicates that many are yet to pick up the skills. Statistically chi square reveals significant difference between sample boys and girls.

Table 6: Children Learns to wait for their turn

Sl.	Frequency and intensity	Boys		Girls		Total	
		N = 30	%	N = 30	%	N = 60	%
1	Not at All	4	13%	5	17%	9	15%
2	To Some Extent	3	10%	6	20%	9	15%
3	To Great Extent	13	43%	15	50%	28	47%
4	Almost always	10	33%	4	13%	14	23%
χ^2	3.8254						

*Not significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 6 shows that 47% of the tribal children comprising (43% boys and 50% girls) were fall in the category of "to great extent", followed by 23% of the children, who were fall in the category of almost always and same percentage 15% of the children were fall in the category of 'to some extent' and at 'not at all'. This suggests that this readiness skill is being picked up by some of the children and not fully formed among all the children. Chi square depicts insignificant difference between sample boys and girls.

Table 7 shows that 42%% of the children comprising (53% boys and 30% girls) exhibit this behaviour almost always, followed by 27%% of the tribal children comprising (20% boys and 33% of girls) were in the category of to great extent, 17% of the children were fall in the

category to some extent and only 15% of the tribal children were found to be at the not at all category. Chi square depicts insignificant difference between boys and girls.

Table 7: Children's play behaviour with other children

Sl.	Frequency and intensity	Boys		Girls		Total	
		N = 30	%	N = 30	%	N = 60	%
1	Not at All	6	20%	3	10%	9	15%
2	To Some Extent	2	7%	8	27%	10	17%
3	To Great Extent	6	20%	10	33%	16	27%
4	Almost always	16	53%	9	30%	25	42%
χ^2	7.56						

*Not significant at p<0.05

Table 8: Children Works with other children

Sl.	Frequency and intensity	Boys		Girls		Total	
		N = 30	%	N = 30	%	N = 60	%
1	Not at All	6	20%	3	10%	9	15%
2	To Some Extent	4	13%	7	23%	11	18%
3	To Great Extent	10	33%	12	40%	22	37%
4	Almost always	10	33%	8	27%	18	30%
χ^2	2.222						

*Not significant at p < 0.05

Table 8 reveals that 37% of the children comprising 33% boys and 40% girls exhibit this skill to great extent, followed by 30% of the children who were fall in the category of almost always. Further table reveals that 18% of the children exhibit this skill to some extent and remaining 15% of the children were found to be at the not at all category. Chi square depicts insignificant difference between boys and girls.

Table 9: Children Wash hand before and after meal

Sl.	Frequency and intensity	Boys		Girls		Total	
		N = 30	%	N = 30	%	N = 60	%
1	Not at All	6	20%	3	10%	9	15%
2	To Some Extent	4	13%	7	23%	11	18%
3	To Great Extent	10	33%	12	40%	22	37%
4	Almost always	10	33%	8	27%	18	30%
χ^2	2.222						

*Not significant at p < 0.05

Table 9 reveal the readiness skill of washing hand before and after meal. It shows that 37% of the tribal children of the Anganwadi centres comprising 33% of boys and 40% of girls exhibit this skill to great extent, followed by 30% of the respondent children, who were fall in the category of almost always, 18% of the children were fall in the category to some extent and only 15% of the tribal children were found to be at the not at all category. Chi square depicts insignificant difference between boys and girls.

Table 10: Children do his/her work independently

Sl.	Frequency and intensity	Boys		Girls		Total	
		N = 30	%	N = 30	%	N = 60	%
1	Not at All	11	37%	6	20%	17	28%
2	To Some Extent	1	3%	7	23%	8	13%
3	To Great Extent	6	20%	12	40%	18	30%
4	Almost always	12	40%	5	17%	17	28%
χ^2	10.8529						

*****Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 10 shows that 30% of the children comprising 20 % boys and 40% of girls exhibit this behaviour to great extent, followed by 28% of the respondent children, who were fall in the category of almost always, 13% of the children were fall in the category to some extent and remaining 28% of the tribal children were found to be at the not at all category. Statistically, chi square reveals significant difference between sample boys and girls. Boys exhibit this behaviour complementary than girls.

Table 11: Children balances body using limbs freely

Sl.	Frequency and intensity	Boys		Girls		Total	
		N = 30	%	N = 30	%	N = 60	%
1	Not at All	2	6%	4	13%	6	10%
2	To Some Extent	6	20%	8	27%	14	23%
3	To Great Extent	13	43%	15	50%	28	47%
4	Almost always	9	30%	3	10%	12	20%
χ^2	4.0952						

*Not significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 11 reveals the readiness skill of children to balance body using limbs freely. It shows that 47% of the tribal children comprising 43% boys and 50% girls performed this skill to great extent, followed by 20% of the children, who were fall in the category of almost always, 23% of the children were fall in the category to some extent and only 10% of the tribal children were found to be at the not at all category. Chi square depicts insignificant between boys and girls.

Table 12 Children greets teachers/ friends

Sl.	Frequency and intensity	Boys		Girls		Total	
		N = 30	%	N = 30	%	N = 60	%
1	Not at All	8	27%	9	30%	17	28%
2	To Some Extent	0	0	5	17%	5	8%
3	To Great Extent	12	40%	11	37%	23	38%
4	Almost always	10	33%	5	17%	15	25%
χ^2	4.3922						

*Not significant at $p < 0.05$

From the above table 12, it shows that 38% of the tribal children comprising (40 %boys and 37% of girls) in Anganwadi centres greets teachers and friends to great extent, followed by 25% of the respondent children, who were fall in the category of almost always, 8% of the children were fall in the category to some extent and remaining 28% of the tribal children were found to be at the not at all category.

Table 13: Children listen attentively to story with appropriate facial expressions

Sl.	Frequency and intensity	Boys		Girls		Total	
		N = 30	%	N = 30	%	N = 60	%
1	Not at All	8	27%	9	30%	17	28%
2	To Some Extent	1	3%	4	13%	5	8%
3	To Great Extent	10	33%	12	40%	22	37%
4	Almost always	11	37%	5	17%	16	27%
χ^2	4.290						

*Not significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 13 and Figure 13 reveal the behaviour of children to listen attentively to story with appropriate facial expression. It shows that 37% of the tribal children comprising (33 % of boys and 40% of girls) exhibit this behaviour to great extent, followed by 27% of the respondent children, who were fall in the category of almost always, 8% of the children were fall in the category to some extent and remaining 28% of the tribal children were found to be at the not at all category. Chi square depicts insignificant difference between sample boys and girls.

SECTION 3 Overall Performances on School Readiness Assessment Test:

Table No. 14 shows that majority 83% of the children have performed at an average level and 17% of the children fall on high level of overall performance on School Readiness Assessment Test. Similar study conducted by Kiernan et al (2008), where findings indicated that majority of children were ready for school, over one-third evidenced difficulties in relation to their cognitive abilities and socio-emotional skills. Regression analyses indicated that factors predictive of school readiness included parental living situation, parenting skills and pre-school attendance. The factors cited as important in influencing children's subsequent school progress included children's characteristics, those scores were not statistically significant. The present study is consistent with the study of Navitha et. al. (2019) where findings revealed that more than half of tribal children from 3-6 years had moderate developmental status in almost all the domains of development.

Table 14: Overall Performances of Tribal Children's on School Readiness Assessment Test

Levels	Boys N = 30	%	Girls N = 30	%	Total N = 60	%
High 50-34	6	20%	4	13%	10	17%
Average 33-17	24	80%	26	87%	50	83%
Low Below16	0	0	0	0	0	0
χ^2	0.48					

Not Significant at $p < 0.05$

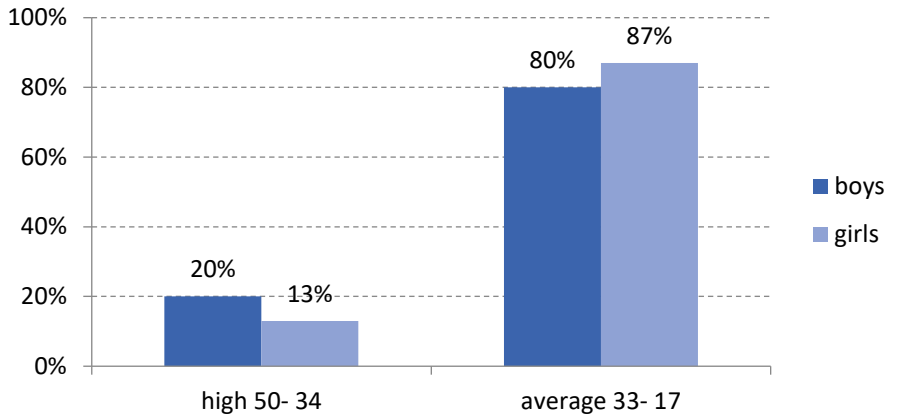

Figure 14: Shows overall scores of Tribal children on School Readiness Assessment Test

Table 15: Area/Subject and competence wise overall performance of children on cognitive and Arithmetic Domain

Competence/Sub Competence	**Frequency and Intensity**	**Boys N = 30**	**%**	**Girls N = 30**	**%**	**Total N = 60**	**%**
Classification	Identifies all three edibles: 1 (Half- done)	11	37%	9	30%	20	33%
Differentiating edible and non-edible	Incorrect answer/ unable to answer: 0	1	3%	1	3%	2	3%
Identifying fruits and vegetables	Identifies all 3 fruits and 3 vegetables:4	9	30%	9	30%	18	30%
	Identifies any two fruits and 2 vegetables :2	9	30%	11	37%	20	33%
	Identifies any 1 fruit and any 2 vegetables: 2	----					
	Incorrect answer / unable to answer:0	-----		---			
Shape and letter shape matching	Frequency and Intensity	Boys N=30	%	Girls N=30	%	Total	%
Match pictures of shapes circle, triangle and square.	Join all the three: 3	9	30%	9	30%	18	30%
	Join any two:2	13	43%	8	27%	21	35%
	Join any one: 1	8	27%	12	40%	20	33%
	Cannot join: 0	---	----	1	3%	1	2%

Sequential thinking	Sub competence	Boys N=30	%	Girls N=30	%	Total	%
Identifies the sequence, Boy holding a banana, boy peeling a banana, boy eating a banana, boy holding the peel of a banana.	Describe the sequence in words:4	10	33%	13	43%	23	38%
	Identifies the sequence only by pointing to the picture:3	17	57%	13	43%	30	50%
	Unable to answer: 0	3	10%	4	13%	7	12%
Pre number concept	Frequency and Intensity	Boys N=30	%	Girls N=30	%	Total	%
Identifies picture of 2 goats and 5 goats, picture of 4 mangoes and 3 mangoes in trees.	Identifies picture with more goats: 1	18	60%	12	40%	30	50%
	Identifies pictures with less number of mangoes: 2	10	33%	13	43%	23	38%
	Unable to answer any: 0	2	7%	5	16%	7	11%

Table 15 reveals the subject and competence wise overall performance of children on Cognitive and Arithmetic Domain of Development. Cognitive development means how children think, explore and figure things out. It is the development of knowledge, skills, problem solving and dispositions, which help children to think about and understand the world around them. Further, table depicts the tasks of classification, shape and letter matching, sequential thinking and pre-number concept.

Further, table also shows the scores of tribal children on sub task of classification on Cognitive and Arithmetic domain. The classification task required identification of fruits, vegetables and differentiating edible and non-edible. It reveals that only 30% of the children both boys and girls identify all 3 fruits and vegetables. However, 33% of the children comprising 30% boys and 37% girls identify any 2 fruits and vegetables, 33% of the tribal children comprising 37% boys and 30% girls identify all three edibles and they performed half-done activity. Only 3% of the children were unable to identify the fruits and vegetables.

However, table depicts the tasks of shape matching. The children were required to match shapes- circle, triangle and square to same shape. It shows that 30% of the tribal children match all the pictures of different shapes, 35% of the children match only two shapes and 33% of the tribal children join only one shape. Remaining 2% of the cu8hildren couldn't perform this task. Meanwhile, table also depicts the sequential thinking of children. Sequencing is an important skill for developing critical thinking, reading comprehension and scientific inquiry. Sequencing helps tribal children use higher order thinking skills by recognizing patterns to understand and predict the world around them. From the table, it shows that 38% of the children comprising (57% boys and 43% girls) identify the sequence and 50 % of the children identify the sequence

only by pointing to the picture and remaining 12% of the children unable to answer. This suggests that some of the children need to pick up this skill.

However, on the sub competence of a pre number concept, the children were required to identify the pictures of more goats and less mangoes. It shows that half of the children 50% (60% boys and 40% girls) identifies picture with more goats, 38% of the children identifies picture with less number of mangoes and remaining 12% of the children unable to perform this task. Kiernan et al (2018) conducted similar study, where the results are consistent and indicates that the majority of children were ready for school, over one-third evidenced difficulties in relation to their cognitive skills.

Table 16: Subject and Competence wise overall performance of children on General Aspects

Sub Competence	Frequency and Intensity	Boys N = 30	%	Girls N = 30	%	Total N = 60	%
Space concept	Correct answer to each question: 1	20	67%	22	73%	42	70%
Picture of a doll under the table, Picture is the child behind the house, picture is the ball inside the box.	Unable to answer any: 0	10	33%	8	27%	18	30%
General information Child will be asked the questions.	For each question correctly answered (for each): 6	30	100%	30	100%	60	100%
Following instruction	Following instruction 1: 1	13	43%	13	43%	26	43%
Child will be given two instructions.	Follows both instruction: 3	15	50%	12	40%	27	45%
	Cannot follow any instruction: 0	2	7%	5	17%	7	12%

Table 16 depicts the sub competence of space concept under Knowledge on General aspect. Children were asked three questions and for each question correctly answered, child obtained 1 score. It depicts that majority 70% of the children comprising (67% boys and 73% girls) correctly answered to each question and remaining 30% of the children unable to answer any one. Further, on the task of general aspect, children were asked 6 questions and each question carries 1 score. It depicts that 100% of the tribal children correctly answered all the questions and obtained 6 marks. This suggests that all the children performed very well on this general aspect. Meanwhile, on the task of following instructions, children were given two instructions and children who follow only one instruction obtained 1 point and others who follow both instructions obtained 3 points. It reveals from the table that 45% of the children follows both instructions, followed by 43% of the tribal children followed only one instruction and remaining 12% of the children couldn't follow any instruction. It suggests the some of the children still needs to pick up this skill.

Table 17 depicts the Reading Readiness of language development among tribal children. In this activity, children were given two tasks: (i) Identification of fruits with beginning sounds and (ii) Matching letters with sounds. It reveals that 43% of the tribal children completed this

task. Further, it depicts that only 18% of the tribal children matches all letters correctly on 2nd task of this activity. It suggests that many of the children required picking up this skill. However, on the readiness skill of the sentence meaning among tribal children, children were shown two pictures and asked to describe the meaning of those pictures. It shows that only 13% of the children performed this task completely and describe both pictures correctly in complete sentence, followed by 21% of the children describes one picture correctly in complete sentence. Further, 30% of the tribal children describes both pictures correctly but in incomplete sentence and remaining 36% of the children were able to identify both pictures, but only one picture was described by them.

Table 17: Area/Subject and Competence wise overall performance of children on language development

Competence/Sub-Competence	Frequency and Intensity	Boys N=30	%	Girls N=30	%	Total N=60	%
Reading readiness Identifies three pictures (mango, banana, pineapple)	Task 1: Identifies both: 2	11	37%	15	50%	26	43%
	Identifies one: 1	12	40%	12	40%	24	40%
	Unable to answer: 0	7	23%	3	10%	10	17%
Matches letters (ga, ma, ba, kha)	Task 2 Matches all letters correctly: 4	6	20%	5	17%	11	18%
	Matches two letters correctly: 3	13	43%	8	27%	21	35%
	Matches one letter correctly: 2	7	23%	10	33%	17	28%
	Unable to match any letter: 0	4	13%	7	23%	11	18%
Child will be shown two pictures (picture 1, a child studying books, picture 2, a girl eating a banana)	∗ Describes both pictures correctly in complete sentences (Active): 6	4	13%	4	13%	8	13%
	∗ Describes one picture correctly in complete sentence (Active): 3	6	20%	7	23%	13	21%
	∗ Describes either/both pictures correctly but in incomplete sentence (Active): 2	9	30%	9	30%	18	30%
	∗ Able to identify both, once picture is described (passive): 1	11	37%	10	37%	21	36%
Story telling / reciting a rhyme	∗ Tells a story /recite a rhyme with at least five sentences/ five phrases depicting a theme in sequence: 8	4	13%	3	10%	7	12%

Children will be asked to tell any story or recite any rhyme.	∗ Tells a story /recite a rhyme with four sentences/ four phrases depicting a theme in sequence: 6	11	37%	10	33%	21	35%
	∗ Tells a story /recite a rhyme with three sentences/ three phrases depicting a theme in sequence: 3	15	50%	17	57%	32	53%
	∗ Unable to tell a story or recite a rhyme: 0	----		----			
Listening Comprehension A short story will be told to the child and simple questions will be asked.	∗ For each of the questions 1 to 3 correctly answered (1 for each): 3	13	43%	15	50%	28	47%
	∗ For the question 4 correctly answered: 2	17	57%	15	50%	32	53%

Further, table also reveals the activity of storytelling/reciting a rhyme. Rhyme and stories are a very important for the development of a child. Children love stories and rhymes with actions. This encourages them to be involved in group activities. It reveals that majority of the tribal children 53% comprising (50% of boys and 57% of girls) tells a story, recite a rhyme with three sentences depicting a theme in sequence, followed by 35% of the children recite a rhyme with phrases and only 12% of the children completely performed this task. Meanwhile, table also depicts the listening comprehension of tribal children. It reveals from the table that majority of tribal children answered all four questions correctly and 47% of the children correctly answered three questions.

CONCLUSION

Early childhood care education (ECCE) is a vital input for child development. While in long term perspective, it serves to provide a sound foundation for all round development of the child, it has also proved to be an effective input for primary schooling. For achieving universalization of elementary education, the school readiness of children needs to be enhanced. Education is a key tool for societal development and transformation. The education of the tribal youngsters has been beset with numerous obstacles and issues. Various factors, including poverty, parental illiteracy, inadequate school facilities, nomadic lifestyle, instruction medium, inappropriate curriculum, early marriages, tribal population location, inadequate supervision, etc., have been identified as contributing to the low educational attainment of tribal children. In India, education among the tribes is a serious and difficult issue.

Due to ongoing injustice and a dearth of educational possibilities, academicians, legislators, and the government must comprehend the predicament and myriad difficulties faced by tribal populations. This study provides valuable insights into the school readiness of Gujjar tribal children, emphasizing areas of strength and potential improvement. The findings can guide intervention programs tailored to enhance overall readiness for formal schooling in this tribal community. This work also demonstrates the critical requirement for administrators to receive thorough training in leadership in organization planning and management as well as teaching methods and general pedagogy.

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