

# **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS AMONG CHENCHU TRIBE: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

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## **Introduction:**

Chenchus are one of the oldest and particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) in Erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, scattered across six districts in the Nallamalai forest. References to Chenchus can be found in various historical writings such as "Gabbilam" by Gurram Jashua, "VallabharayudiKreedaabhiraamam," and "Yamunudi'sRajaneetiSutraalu" (Ramesh 2013). The ecological significance of the word "Chenchus" is sought to be attributed to people who live under a Chettu (Tree), being called Chenchu (Aiyyappan 1948, p148). According to another version, these people were in the habit of eating a kind of rat locally known as 'Chunchu,' and the same term was applied to identify the people. The Chenchu tribe is divided into many exogamous clans, which are prefixed to their names. Some of the clans found among Chenchus are 'Mandi,' 'Chigurla,' 'Udathala,' 'Tokala,' 'Mekala,' 'Bhunami,' 'Katraju,' 'Arthi,' 'Dasari,' etc. (TCRTI 2004).

According to V.N.V.K Sastry (2010), in addition to the existing groups, two more types were added: 'forest Chenchus' and 'village Chenchus.' Again, the village Chenchus are divided into two types: 'Bontha Chenchus' and 'Krishna Chenchus.' The village Chenchus inhabit plain areas, while the forest Chenchus inhabit dense forests and hilly areas. The mother tongue of all Chenchus is Telugu. Chenchus worship and believe in many deities and spirits, both malevolent and benevolent, and follow all Hindu festivals. Their religious pantheon includes GaralaMaisamma, Yellamma, Peddamma, Sunkulamma, Mantahnalamma, Ankalamma, and gods like Bagavanthulu, Lingamaiah, Pothuraju, and Mallanna. Like other tribes, Chenchus don't have any focal music or dances. However, Chenchus are skilled in drum beating, known as 'Thappetlu.' Nearly everybody in their community knows drum beating, possibly due to frequent resettlement from one place to another. The hamlets inhabited by Chenchus are called 'Pentas' and 'Gudems' (clusters of houses). A Chenchu village is known as a "Penta." Each penta consists of a few huts spaced apart and grouped together based on kinship patterns. Close relatives live nearby, while distant ones reside farther away. Their homes comprise few belongings and are generally sparse and spartan in appearance.

In Andhra Pradesh, there are 35 tribal groups, among which, Bodo Gadaba, GutobGadaba, Bondo Poraja, Khond Poroja, Parangiperja, Chenchu, Dongaria Khonds, Kuttiya Kondhs, Kolam, Kondareddis, Konda Savaras, and Thoti were recognized as Primitive Tribal Groups in 1975 (see MoTA). Among them, Chenchus are the most vulnerable (Naik and Rahiman 2007), and their traditional way of life has been based on hunting and food gathering. Chenchus mainly

inhabit the dense forest areas of Nallamalla forest near the banks of the Krishna River. Haimendorf (1982) described Chenchus in his study as having a physical make-up that largely conforms to a racial type called Veddoid, a term derived from the Veddas, a primitive tribe of Sri Lanka (Ceylon). Like the Veddas, the Chenchus are of short and slender stature with very dark skin, wavy or curly hair, broad faces, flat noses, and a trace of prognathism.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

Similar to other tribes in India, access to health education and other developmental opportunities for the Chenchus has remained elusive for years. Despite special developmental initiatives and the establishment of the exclusive Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) for Chenchu welfare, development progress appears to fall short, and they continue to struggle to access basic facilities. Major challenges encompass health, education, livelihoods, migration, and child marriages, among others. According to the 2011 census, the total Chenchu population is 49,232, a relatively small percentage of the overall tribal population. The literacy rate among Chenchus stands at 25.75%, with male literacy at 32.58% and female literacy at 18.73%. In comparison to other sub-tribes, Chenchu literacy rates, both among males and females, are significantly lower (TCRTI 2004). Studies consistently report that literacy levels among Chenchus are subpar, with illiteracy serving as a primary hindrance to their social development.

Historically, there were schools for Chenchus in Mahabubnagar and Kurnool districts before independence (Sakti 2013). Recognizing the low literacy levels among Chenchus, the government has continually strived to improve literacy through various developmental interventions, starting with the Fifth Five-Year Plan. To enhance literacy rates, the government has established various educational institutions such as Girijan Vidhya Vikasa Kendraalu (GVVKs), ashram schools, residential schools, and hostels for boys and girls. Since 1975, the government has set up 14 ashram schools in Chenchu hamlets in Prakasam and other residential schools. Despite these efforts, the literacy rate has not exceeded 26%, and the situation has remained stagnant for an extended period. Several factors contribute to this low literacy rate, including socio-cultural factors, parental involvement, student engagement, and teacher effectiveness.

In light of this background and context, the researcher has undertaken a descriptive study to examine the issues and challenges in achieving literacy levels and improving retention rates among the Chenchus. The study explores various issues such as environmental and health factors, parental and teacher attitudes, as well as their perceptions, as reported by parents, teachers, and students.

## Chenchus Education in the Pre-Independence Era

The Chenchus were spread across three regions: Telangana, Rayalaseema, and Coastal Andhra, particularly in the Nallamalai forest on the banks of the Krishna River. Geographically, the Chenchus were separated and ruled by the Hyderabad Nizam and the British under the Madras Presidency. Historical evidence reveals the existence of schools for the Chenchus during this period. Haimendorf, in his book "Chenchus: Jungle Folk of the Deccan," mentions that in 1916, primary schools were established in major Chenchu settlements in the Prakasam district. He further notes the presence of a special school for girls in Pecheruvu, Atmakuru mandal, Kurnool district. These schools attracted a significant number of students who were provided with midday meals and clothing. It is also reported that attendance was satisfactory. For example, in Bairlutee, 49 children were enrolled, half of whom were girls, and a similar number of children were registered in Naguluti. These schools offered only primary education, and those who performed well had the opportunity to attend the board high school in Atmakur, where boarding and lodging facilities were provided.

During a field visit, the headmaster of Bairlutee reported that their school had completed 100 years. This information was conveyed to them by officials from the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) who had visited their school in May 2013. Additionally, literature reports that in 1946, a school was established for the Chenchus in Mannanur, Mahabubnagar district of the Telangana region, under the Nizam's government (Sakti 2013, pp. 141). Apart from the aforementioned instances, there is further evidence of schools being established for the Chenchus. The table below illustrates the number of schools, enrollment figures, and expenditure incurred on each child. Interestingly, schools were also established in Adilabad district during the Nizam's rule. Notably, some parts of the Chenchu-inhabited areas were privileged to have schools provided by the British government.

**Table**  
**Chenchu Schools during 1925-28**

Year	Expenditure on education	Number of Chenchu schools	Number of Children on Roll			Expenditure per child per year (Rs)
			Boys	Girls	Total	
1925-26	9528	15	254	116	380	25
1926-27	12448	21	305	141	446	27
1927-28	16448	19	282	156	438	38
Total	38027	55	851	413	1264	90
Average	12676	18	283	138	421	30

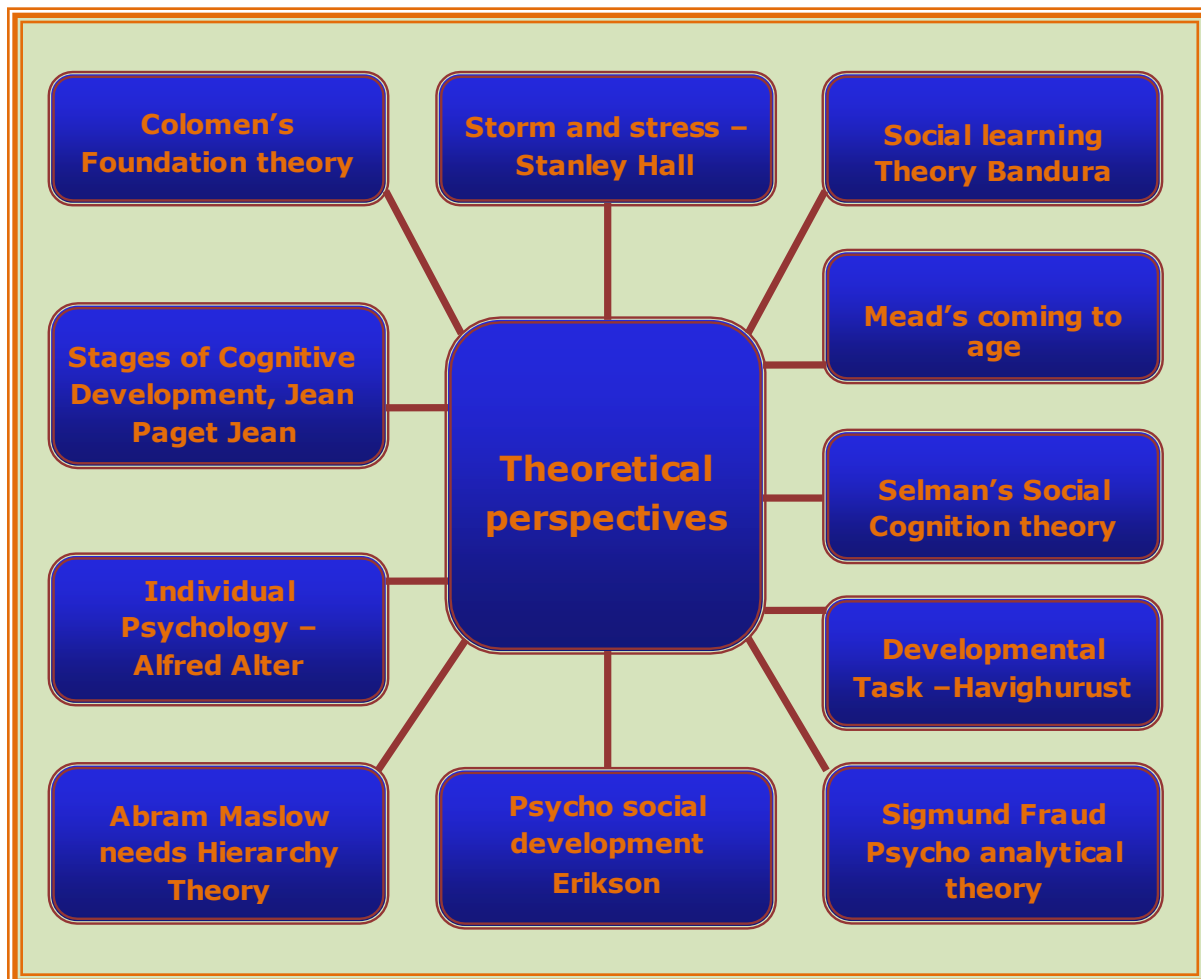
*Source: Preceding No. 31, Press, Date 15.07.1932 of the Chief Conservator of Forest, Kurnool, accessed from ITDA Srisailam*

## Theoretical Framework

Theory provides concepts to name what we observe and to explain the relationships between these concepts. It allows us to understand what we see and devise strategies for effecting change. It is a tool that helps us identify problems and plan ways to alter situations (Moore 1991). Theoretical perspectives on the context of tribal students shed light on their understanding and perceptions of education, which significantly impact their development. Tribal students often grapple with various socio-psychological challenges and inferiority complexes shaped by their upbringing and environment.

In this process, a tribal student undergoes an exciting but challenging transition phase in the human life cycle. This phase marks their evolution into adults with newfound independence and heightened responsibilities. They are in a constant quest to establish their unique identities, question societal values, and assert their existence. During adolescence, they develop skills essential for their growth into compassionate and responsible adults. When adolescents receive support and encouragement from caring adults, they flourish, becoming resourceful contributors to their families and societies. Regrettably, many Chenchu children find themselves at a crossroads, leading to their disengagement from schools due to various reasons. In the following section, we will explore some theories that provide insights into the challenges faced by tribal children, particularly the Chenchus.

**Graph: 1Theoretical Framework**



*Source: Authors work from various psychological theories*

Havighurst (1951) posited that developmental tasks within each stage are sequential, meaning each task is a prerequisite for the succeeding one. The optimal time for mastering these tasks is, to some extent, biologically determined. Adolescence involves nine major tasks:

- Accepting one's physical appearance and acquiring a masculine or feminine gender identity.
- Developing appropriate relationships with peers of both sexes.
- Achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults.
- Ensuring economic independence.
- Preparing for a career and entering the job market.
- Developing cognitive skills and concepts for social competence.
- Understanding and practicing socially responsible behavior.
- Preparing for marriage and family.
- Acquiring values harmonious with a scientific worldview.

Adolescents may be dealing with multiple tasks simultaneously, and the importance of specific tasks varies during the early, middle, and late stages of adolescence (Ingersoll, n.d.). The Developmental Tasks Model suggests that adolescents who successfully navigate these tasks emerge as well-adjusted and socially integrated adults.

Hall (1904) originally viewed adolescence as a period of "storm and stress" (S&S), marked by pressure from parents, peers, teachers, and society to grow up quickly. However, Coleman (1978) clarified that the stresses of adolescence do not all occur simultaneously. Adolescents typically face one or two stressful events at a time, with varying peak ages for each. Coleman's perspective implies that adolescence is not necessarily a short, uniformly stressful period, but rather a time of smoothly evolving developmental changes.

Freud (1948) highlighted the increase in sexuality as a significant stressor during adolescence. This increase can lead to the re-emergence of the oedipal situation, requiring resolution through attraction to peers of the opposite sex. The heightened sex drive generates stress and anxiety, leading to the activation of defense mechanisms to restore equilibrium and protect against anxiety.

Erikson (1968) emphasized the acquisition of ego identity and a sense of self, influenced by cultural factors. He proposed a series of psychosocial stages, each associated with a crisis or psychosocial task. Developing a vocational identity and a personal philosophy is crucial during adolescence, providing a framework for evaluating and coping with life events. Without this, adolescents may struggle with self-doubt, role confusion, and potentially engage in self-destructive behaviors like juvenile delinquency.

Adler (1964), an "Individual Psychologist," discussed styles of life for coping with feelings of inferiority arising from individual and social development. Adolescence takes center stage in forming constructive or destructive styles of life. Given the physiological changes during this stage, it demands careful attention and care. Abraham Maslow's "self-actualization" theory (1943) organized human needs into a hierarchy, ascending from basic physiological needs to self-actualization.

Piaget (1952) argued that intelligence develops through stages influenced by both biological predispositions and cultural factors. Adolescents possess abstract thinking skills, allowing them to explore questions about their identity and make long-term plans and commitments. Selman's Social Cognition Theory (1980) expanded on Piaget's theory, emphasizing adolescents' ability to consider the perspectives of others through social cognition and social role-taking skills.

Social Learning Theory (SLT), outlined by Bandura (1969, 1973), posits that environmental factors shape behavior by reinforcing desired behaviors and providing models of appropriate behavior. Adolescents learn by observing and imitating models. Mead (1950, 1953) argued that development varies across cultures due to differences in cultural institutions, which define expected behaviors for adolescents. Rosenberg's self-esteem theory (1965) has had a significant influence on various socio-economic, emotional, and psychological aspects of Chenchu students, particularly during their formative years, including their adolescent stage.

### **Scientific Background**

The scientific background draws upon various psycho-social theories. These theories emphasize that a student's physical, cognitive, and emotional development occurs within social institutions, including family, friends, and school. Thus, comprehending the nature of development necessitates an understanding of the social contexts in which it takes place. For adolescent children, families, peers, and schools are the most significant cultural contexts where development unfolds.

Undoubtedly, the psycho-social environment in which a child grows up significantly influences their attitude, behavior, and personality. It also impacts their anxiety levels, mood, and social and interpersonal interactions. Given these facts, this study seeks to examine the psycho-social factors that have a substantial impact on tribal education. The theories mentioned above enable us to understand various aspects of tribal students, including:

- ✓ The social dimension influenced by cultural norms and rules.
- ✓ The psychological dimension encompassing gender issues, personality development, and self-esteem.
- ✓ The affective and relational dimension involving emotions, viewpoints, and feelings.
- ✓ Specific issues like attention, conduct, and behavior problems, anxiety, mood, social and interpersonal difficulties.

- ✓ The family environment.
- ✓ The teacher-student relationship.

As such, this study aims to explore the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents within the Chenchu community, taking into account not only knowledge acquisition but also the social and cultural aspects unique to this community.

**The objectives of this study are as follows:**

- ✓ To identify the gaps and challenges hindering Chenchu enrollment in Ashram Schools within the Nallamalai area of Prakasam district.
- ✓ To examine the perceptions and suggestions of various stakeholders, including students, parents, and teachers, to enhance Chenchu education.
- ✓ To provide recommendations for improving the literacy rate among the Chenchus while considering their socio-cultural settings.
- ✓

## **6. Research Methodology**

### **6.1 Sampling Method and Procedure**

We utilized the Multistage Stratified Random Sampling Technique, which is a probability sampling method. Arber (2001) defines probability sampling as a method where "each element in a well-defined population (universe of elements) has a known and non-zero chance of selection." Our sampling process involved three stages.

In the first step, we compiled a list of ashram schools in Prakasam district from the Department of Tribal Education, Andhra Pradesh's website. Based on this data, we categorized the schools into primary schools, upper primary schools, co-educational schools, boys' schools, and girls' schools, taking into account enrollment figures and information gathered during a pilot study and from government records.

The second stage involved further classification of schools. We divided all ashram schools in Prakasam district into two categories: Category-I (primary schools with classes 1-5) and Category-II (high schools with classes 7-10). Within each category, we further categorized schools based on their enrollment figures, distinguishing between high-enrollment schools, moderate-enrollment schools, and low-enrollment schools.

The final stage involved the selection of respondents.

Table 1: Sample size

Sl. No	Type of School	Name of the School	Level of Enrolment	Strength	Students Sample Size
1	Upper Primary	Marripalem	High	209	40
2		Peda Mantanala	Moderate	118	40
3		Billagondipenta	Low	43	40
4	High	Murikimalla	High	265	40
5		Garapenta	Moderate	182	40
6		Chintala	Low	127	40
Total				944	240
					25%

**The final stage involves the selection of the sample respondents.** We have drawn a sample of 40 students from each school using systematic sampling. Students from Primary schools (grades IV and V) and High schools (grades IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, and IX) were selected for data collection. This results in a total sample size of 240 students (6 schools x 40 students), which represents 25% of the universe. We ensured equal gender representation, although, due to limited availability, a slightly higher percentage of male respondents were included. Additionally, we set aside 10 backup samples of students in case some were unavailable for participation. In addition to the student sample, we conducted interviews and gathered qualitative information from teachers, headmasters, and parents through focus group discussions and personal interactions.

Graph: 1 Distribution of the Students by Gender and Class

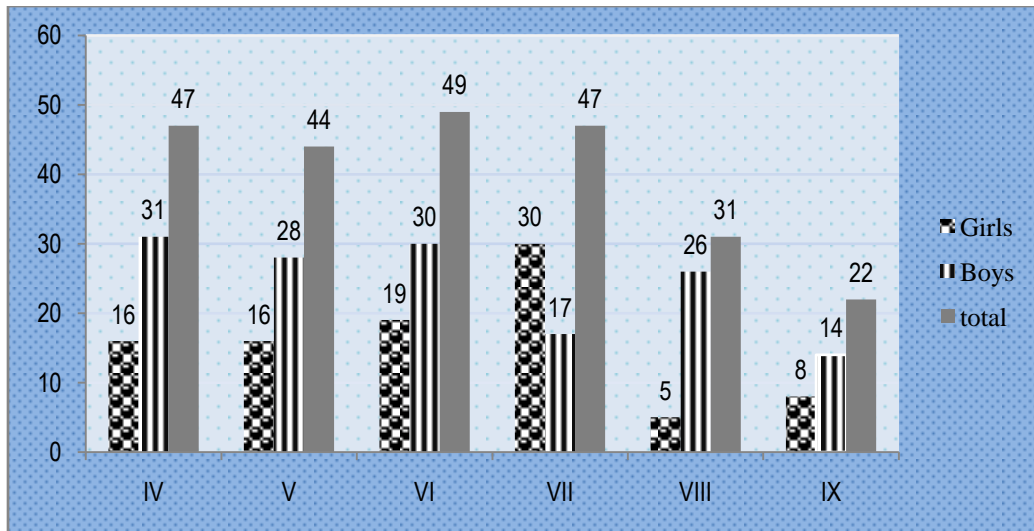
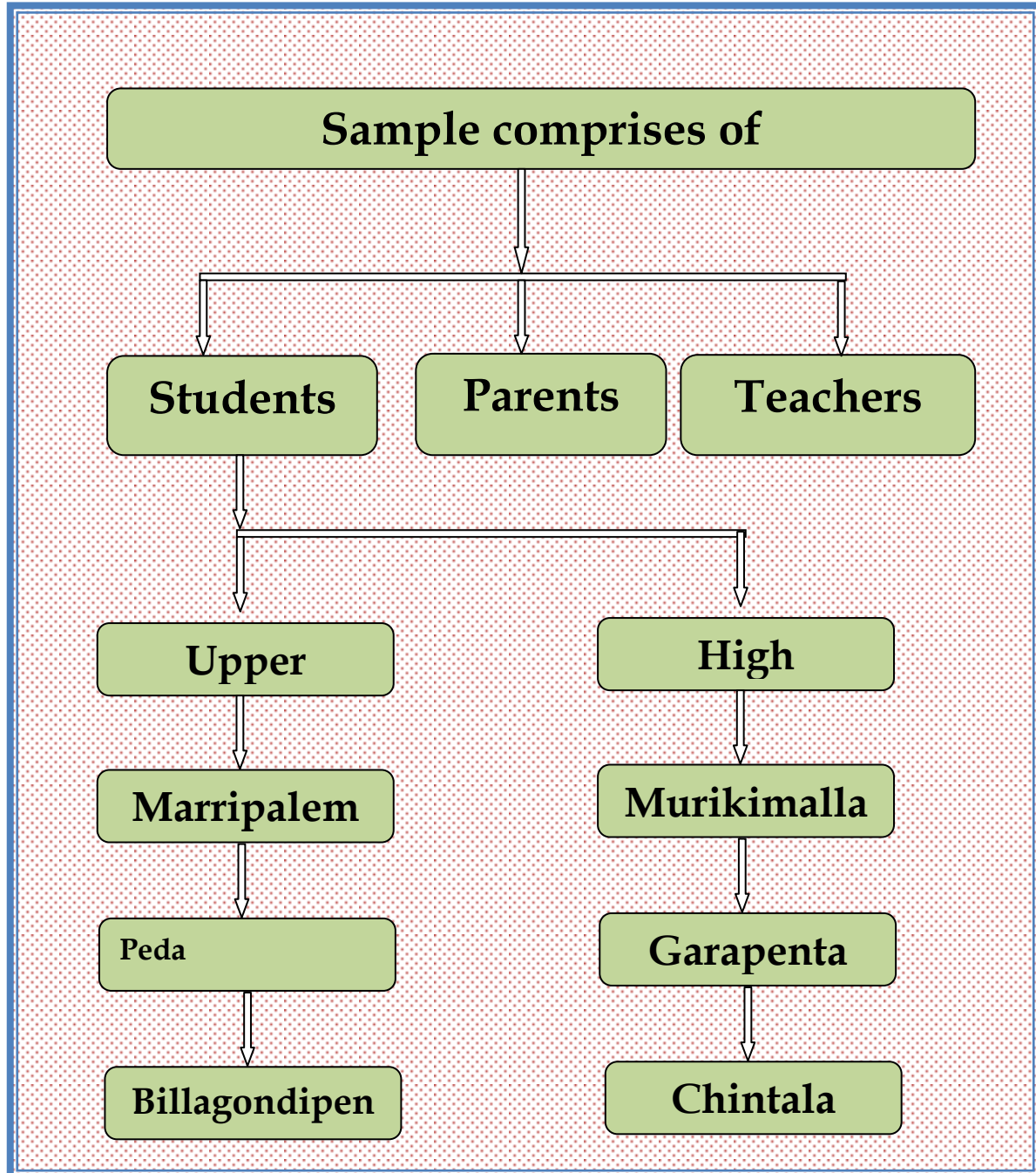




Chart .1

Sample Design including Schools and Sample



## **6.2 Data Collection**

We used well-designed tools, including interview schedules with both structured and semi-structured questions, for data collection. The interview schedules were initially created in English and then translated into the vernacular language (Telugu) for enhanced clarity during data collection. Before commencing data collection, we explained the study's purpose and conducted an ice-breaking session. Interviews were conducted separately with teachers and the headmaster. Data collection took place from December 2012 to April 2013.

### **6.2.1 Ethical Concerns**

We obtained prior permission from the relevant authorities to conduct research in tribal ashram schools. The researcher approached higher authorities for approval, and after receiving it, the study was carried out. In accordance with the Helsinki Declaration, obtaining consent from individuals chosen for research purposes is crucial, and the results are de-identified until final reporting.

## **6.3 Tools of Data Collection**

Tools are a critical component of data collection, and for this study, various tools were utilized, incorporating both primary and secondary data sources.

### **6.3.1 Primary Data**

**Interview Schedule:** We employed interview schedules to collect data from students. Focus group discussions were conducted with parents, teachers, and the warden or headmaster to explore various issues related to tribal education, including awareness of education, government schemes, dropout rates, retention measures, and problems specific to tribal education. These interview schedules included both structured and open-ended questions. Simmons (2001) notes that interview schedules consist of predetermined sets of questions that are valuable for data collection.

**Focus Group Discussions:** Focus group discussions with various stakeholders were conducted to identify the root causes of low literacy levels among the Chenchu tribe. Parents and teachers were engaged in group discussions, eliciting their perspectives on the research problem.

**Field Notes & Photographs:** Field notes played a crucial role in gathering qualitative information. The researcher-maintained field notes as Emerson (1995) emphasizes that field notes are the observer's "raison d'être." To capture field notes, it was essential to observe and examine the field situation. Verbal and non-verbal discussions were recorded. Photographs served as important evidence in data collection, capturing relevant context and events.

### 6.3.2 Secondary Data

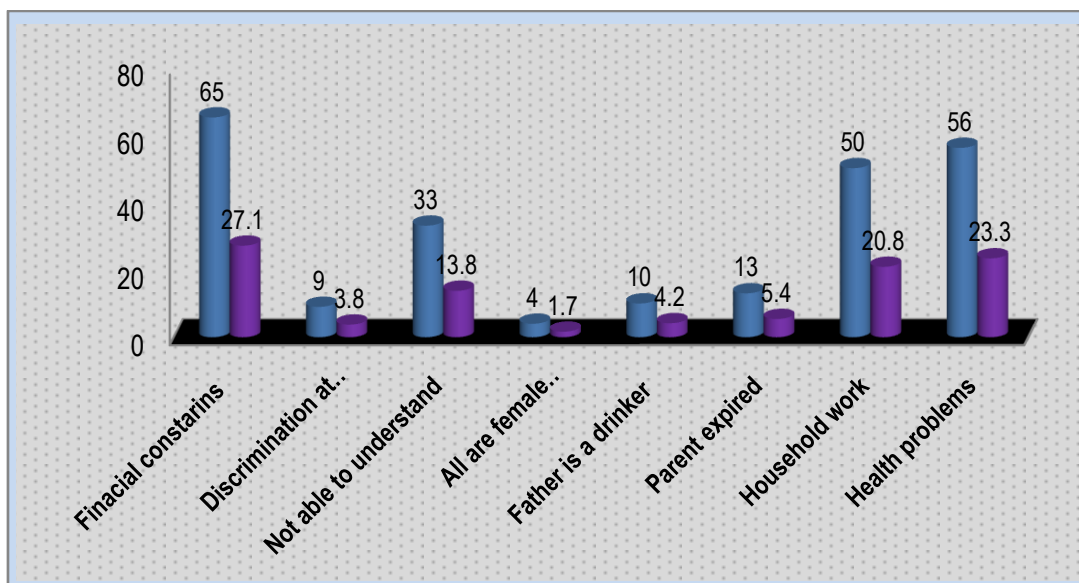
Secondary data sources included government reports, census reports, annual reports from the Department of Education, various reports from the Tribal Welfare Department (including annual reports, census reports, Sarvashiksha Abhiyan reports, DISE Reports, Tribal Welfare Departmental notes, ITDA Srisailam Reports), journal articles related to tribal education, theses from Shodhganga, published and unpublished reports, newspaper articles, reports from the Education department, and electronic versions of reports obtained from websites, among others.

## 7. Analysis of the Content & Results

In this study, data has been collected from three crucial primary stakeholders who bear sole responsibility for educational development and literacy improvement.

### 7.1 Students

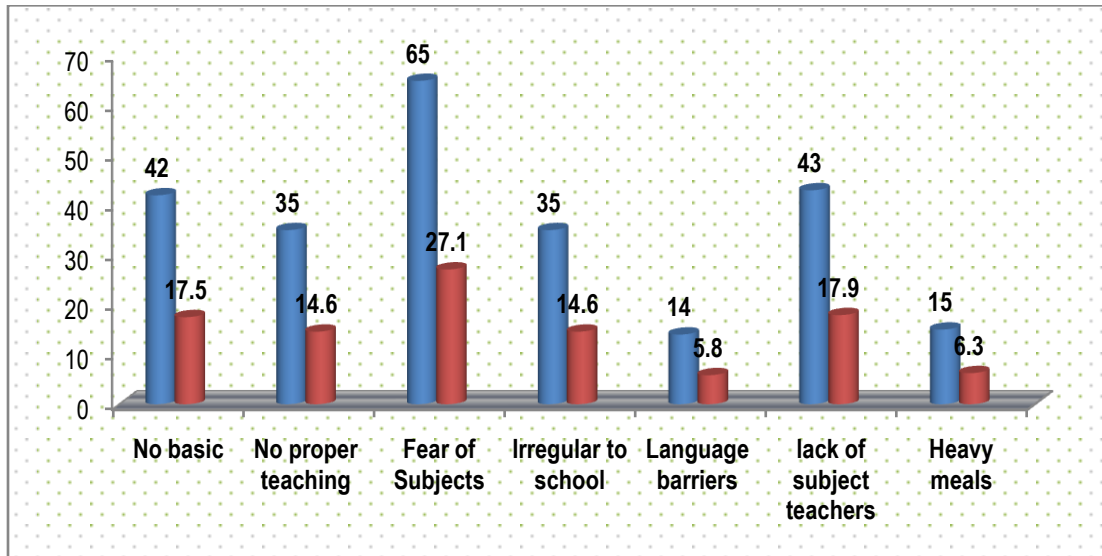
**Graph : 1 Distribution of Constrains in Education as Reported by Students**



The above graph illustrates the obstacles students face in pursuing their education. Nearly eight reasons have been identified as barriers to obtaining an education. The majority of students feel that financial constraints are the most significant hurdle, with 27.1 percent of the total respondents expressing this view. Meanwhile, 23.3 percent of the respondents cited health problems as a major barrier, and another 20.8 percent stated that household chores were a significant issue. Additionally, 13.8 percent of the respondents reported having difficulty understanding the subjects, while 5.4 percent of students felt that there was no one at home to take care of them. Furthermore, 4.2 percent expressed that their parents, particularly their fathers,

had an alcoholic attitude that kept them away from school. In a similar vein, 1.7 percent shared that being a female child in the family made it challenging for them to excel in education. In conclusion, a range of issues serve as barriers to the education of the Chenchus.

**Graph: 2Reasons for not understanding the Subject**

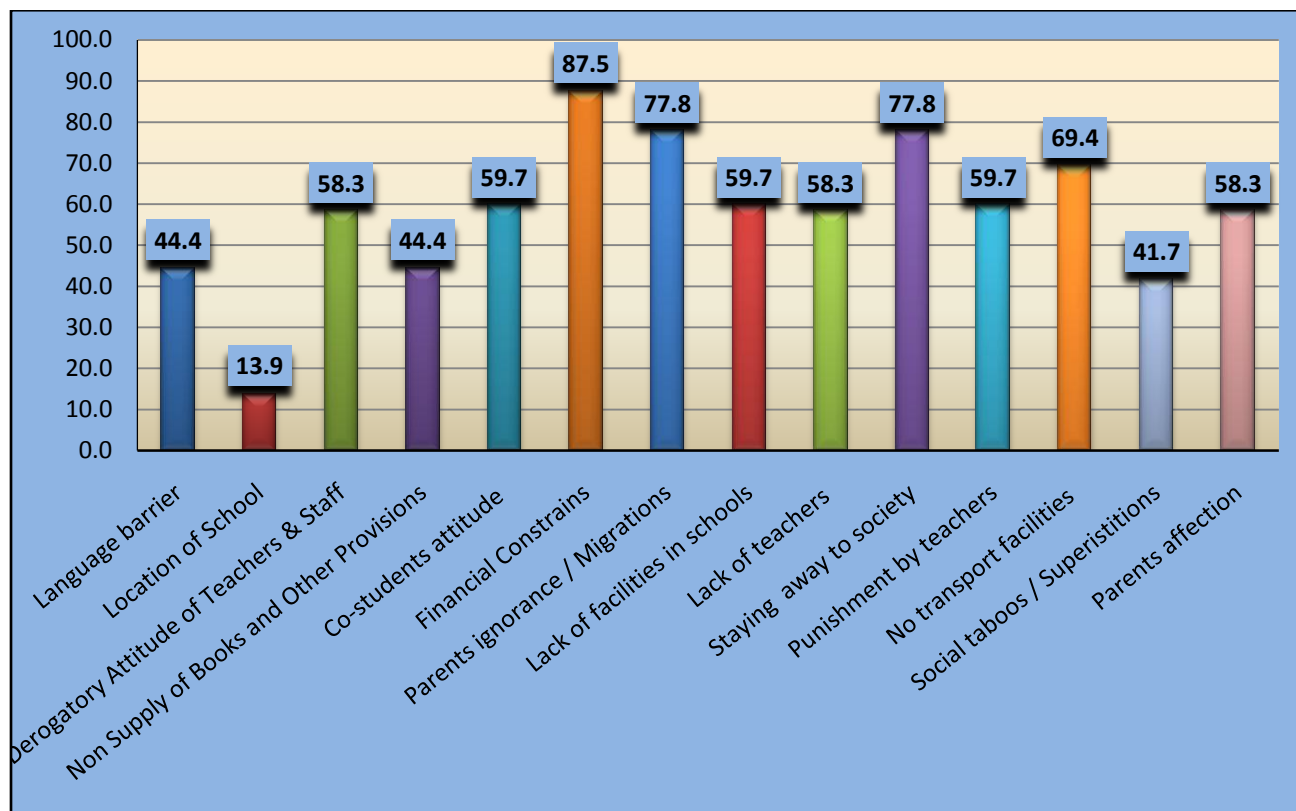


The above graph illustrates the reasons why students struggle to understand certain subjects. Students were asked to identify the problems they face in comprehending subjects, and a total of seven reasons were identified as challenging for students. Among these reasons, a significant proportion of students, 27.1 percent, expressed that they have a fear of certain subjects, which hinders their concentration. This fear is particularly associated with Hindi and English, and to a lesser extent, with Mathematics and Science subjects. Another group of students, comprising 17.9 percent, mentioned that the lack of subjects in their schools made them apprehensive about those subjects. An additional 17.5 percent of students attributed their poor performance to a lack of basic knowledge in the subjects. Similarly, 14.6 percent of students cited inadequate teaching as a reason for their struggles, and some students faced difficulties due to absenteeism, which affected their performance in certain subjects.

Furthermore, 5.8 percent of students indicated language as a barrier. They found it challenging to understand subjects because the language used by teachers and in the textbooks was unfamiliar to their own language. Interestingly, a small percentage reported that heavy meals affected their ability to comprehend subjects. In summary, it can be concluded that Chenchu students encounter curriculum-related challenges in teaching and understanding certain subjects.

Parents

**Graph: 3 Distribution of problems expressed by parents as barriers to Education**



*Source: primary data*

### Multiple Bar Diagram 3: Barriers to Chenchu Education as Reported by Parents

The above multiple bar diagram reveals the barriers to education reported by parents. The study collected various opinions to assess the gaps in the delivery of tribal education. A total of 14 aspects have been identified as major hurdles to Chenchu education. Parents were asked to express as many reasons as barriers to education as they found relevant. Each aspect in the above graph is independent, and the percentages are calculated accordingly.

Out of a total of 72 respondents, 44.4 percent of the parents mentioned that their children face language problems. This is because the Chenchu dialect used in their locality differs from the language in the textbooks, making it difficult for the children to follow along. A smaller percentage (11.2%) stated that the location of schools is a major barrier to education. A significant 58.3 percent of parents believe that the derogatory attitude of teachers and other staff is a hindrance to their children's education. Another 44.4 percent of parents reported that the non-supply of primers and notebooks is a problem. Additionally, 59.7 percent of parents indicated that the attitude of co-students is problematic for their children. A substantial majority (87.5%) of parents cited financial constraints as the major hurdle for obtaining education. Similarly, 77.8

percent of parents mentioned that migration and ignorance of the importance of education are significant drawbacks among Chenchus.

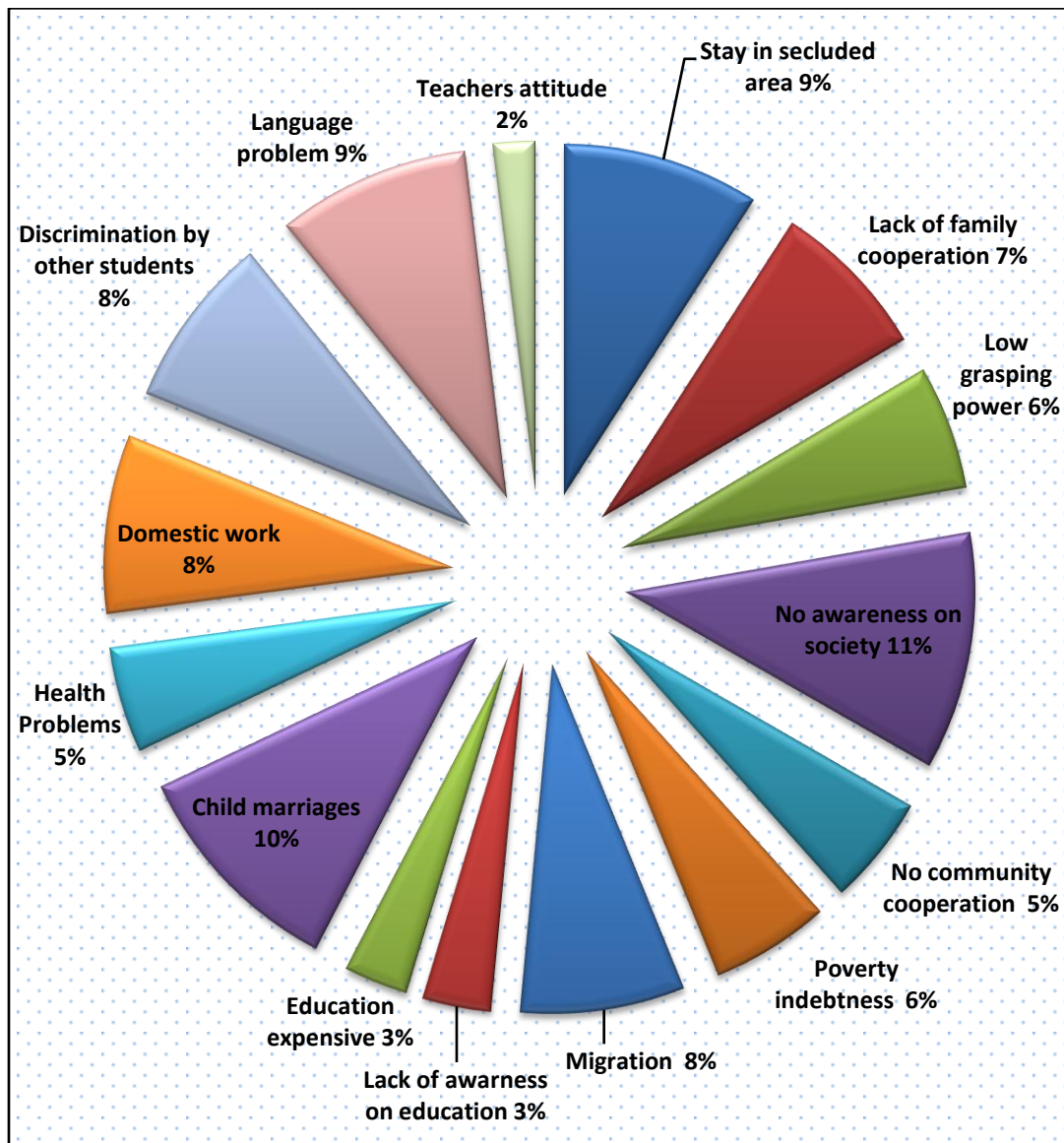
Lack of facilities and punishment by teachers in Ashram Schools were identified as problems by an equal proportion of 59.7 percent of the total respondents. It was observed during fieldwork that many schools do not have proper facilities. Additionally, 58.3 percent of parents reported that the lack of teachers in schools discourages Chenchus from pursuing education, with the long absenteeism of teachers on deputation being a major issue. Moreover, 77.8 percent of parents expressed that staying away from civilized society has become a curse for their development.

Transport to Chenchu habitations is another major issue, reported by as many as 69.4 percent of parents. Chenchu habitations are usually located in secluded areas with inadequate transport facilities. Social taboos and superstitions were reported as barriers to attaining education among Chenchus, with this view expressed by 41.7 percent of the total respondents. The last issue mentioned by as many as 58.3 percent of the total respondents is that parents' affection prevents their children from being away from home. This aspect was consistently observed during fieldwork and confirmed by teachers during interactions with them.

In conclusion, it can be inferred that a majority of the reasons hinder the progress of education among Chenchus. Simultaneously, remedies have been obtained from the same respondents to address these problems. The possible remedies will be presented in the following sections.

Teachers

**Chart: 2 Distribution of Teachers Opinions for Chenchu Dropout rate**



**Chart 2: Reasons for Dropout Rate Among Chenchu Students as Reported by Teachers**

The above pie chart illustrates the perceptions and opinions of teachers regarding the reasons for the high dropout rate among Chenchu students. Teachers were asked to mention the reasons for dropout among Chenchus, and a total of around 15 reasons were reported as major barriers.

The majority of teachers (11%) felt that a lack of awareness about society among Chenchus keeps them away from education. Another 10% expressed that child marriages are a major hurdle

that forces Chenchu students to leave school during their teenage years. An equal proportion of teachers (9%) stated that language barriers and geographical locations (secluded habitations) are causes for the dropout rate. Similarly, an equal proportion (8%) of teachers shared that domestic work (household chores), migrations, and discrimination by non-Chenchu students are reported reasons for the dropout rate.

Another equal proportion (6%) of respondents emphasized low grasping power, poverty, and indebtedness as hurdles to education that lead to dropout rates. Meanwhile, another equal proportion (5%) of teachers mentioned that a lack of family cooperation (institutional support), absence of community cooperation, and health problems cause more dropout rates. Similarly, equal proportions of teachers reported that a lack of awareness about education and the increasing cost of education in contemporary society contribute to the dropout rate among the Chenchu community.

Apart from the socioeconomic reasons, teachers also highlighted the role of superstitions in keeping Chenchus away from education. Teachers and headmasters from all the schools mentioned that Chenchus have a fear of two things: the police and superstitions, particularly sorceresses and devils. It has been reported that Chenchus often believe that devils reside in Ashram Schools and try to harm Chenchu students. When school students fall sick for more than two days, Chenchus develop the idea that there is a devil in the school, which tries to harm the children. Such beliefs keep Chenchu students away from school for extended periods, leading to significant absenteeism that can hinder their studies. In conclusion, it can be inferred that besides socioeconomic reasons, there are unreported factors that contribute to Chenchu students dropping out of school. Consequently, Ashram Schools are perceived as food and provision centers in tribal habitations.

Table: 2 Suggestions offered by parents for betterment Education (N=72)

SI. No	Suggestions offered	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Parents involvement	45	(62.5)
2	Work with dedication	51	(70.8)
3	Teachers must reside in the Ashram school quarters.	49	(68.1)
4	Appointment of non -Chenchu teachers	04	(5.6)
5	Provide higher education up to intermediate in Ashram Schools	21	(29.2)
6	Timing to be followed	26	(36.1)
7	Set the achievement targets for the teachers in terms of results and retention of students	36	(50.0)
8	All facilities to be provided	46	(63.9)
9	Proper monitoring	52	(72.2)
10	Provide digital (Computer) education	09	(12.5)
11	Conduct special classes for backlog	04	(5.6)



	students.		
12	Involve parents in the school management.	08	(11.1)
13	Provide bank loans for higher education.	05	(6.9)
14	Change in teachers' attitude	37	(51.4)
15	Organize exposure visits, study tours	16	(22.2)
16	Appoint lady teachers	16	(22.2)
17	Appoint local area teachers	17	(23.6)
18	Adequate teachers	29	(40.3)
19	Sports encouragement	16	(22.2)
20	Parents must be educated	09	(12.5)

Source: Primary data (responses are individual)

Parents were interviewed to gather their suggestions for the improvement of Ashram Schools, and they offered a total of 20 suggestions. These suggestions are presented in Table 2. Of the 72 respondents, the suggestions from parents for enhancing tribal education are reported here as counts instead of percentages, as this was an open-ended question.

The majority of respondents (72.2%) emphasized that proper monitoring is essential for improving the situation, while a close second majority (70.8%) believed that teacher dedication would play a crucial role. Another significant portion of parents (68.1%) expressed that teachers should reside in staff quarters to enhance Ashram School education.

Many parents (63.9%) believed that facilities in the school could bring about positive changes. Given that Chenchus excel in archery and other games, 63.9% of parents urged the encouragement of sports and games in schools to improve retention rates. Moreover, 62.5% of parents emphasized the importance of parental involvement in the success of tribal school education. Regarding the role of teachers, 51.4% of parents felt that a change in teachers' attitudes could yield positive results. Additionally, 50% of parents suggested that setting targets for teachers in terms of academic results and retention rates would have a significant impact. Another 40.3% believed that appointing an adequate number of teachers could boost literacy rates among Chenchus.

To significantly improve literacy rates, 29.2% of parents proposed upgrading Ashram Schools to at least an intermediate level of education. A suggestion from 23.6% of parents was to appoint local teachers in Ashram Schools, while 22.2% advocated for hiring female teachers, organizing exposure visits and study tours, and incorporating sports and games into the daily curriculum.

A smaller proportion of parents (12.5%) recommended introducing computer education in Ashram Schools and raising awareness among parents about education's importance. The involvement of parents in school committees was suggested by 11.1% of respondents. Additionally, 6.9% of parents expressed the opinion that providing bank loans for higher education would positively impact literacy among Chenchus. Finally, a minor percentage of respondents (5.6%) believed that appointing Chenchu teachers and focusing on weaker students could yield positive results. In summary, the overall analysis indicates that parental involvement, teacher dedication, and proper monitoring are crucial for ensuring the effective delivery of

education and bringing about significant improvements. These factors, along with the aforementioned suggestions, can contribute to enhancing tribal education.

**Findings:** Based on the data and insights gathered through focus group discussions with teachers and parents, the following issues were identified:

**Collapse of Village Headmanship and Traditional Practices:** The decline of traditional leadership structures and practices in Chenchu villages has had an impact on education.

**Introduction of Modern Technologies (TVs, Cell Phones):** The introduction of modern technologies, such as televisions and cell phones, has influenced the Chenchu community, including its approach to education.

**Child Marriages:** Child marriages are prevalent among the Chenchu community, affecting students' ability to continue their education.

**Sensitive Mentality:** Many Chenchu students exhibit a sensitive mentality, which can influence their educational experiences.

**Superstitions:** Superstitions, particularly related to schools being built in burial grounds, have contributed to educational challenges.

**Lack of Livelihood Opportunities and Migrations:** The absence of viable livelihood opportunities and frequent migrations impact students' educational continuity.

**Deficiency in Basic Education:** A lack of foundational education leads to a high dropout rate as students progress to higher classes.

**Adjustment Problems with Mainstream Society:** Chenchu students face challenges in adjusting to mainstream society, affecting their educational journeys.

**Promotion System in Schools:** The promotion system in schools is a significant factor contributing to the high dropout rate.

**Parental Attitudes and Involvement:** The level of seriousness and care exhibited by parents towards their children plays a role in dropout rates.

**Corruption in Ashram Schools:** Corruption within Ashram Schools hinders the quality of education provided to Chenchu students.

**Abuse of Teachers by Higher Officials:** Higher officials' mistreatment of teachers in front of their students can negatively impact the educational environment.

**Reluctance of Non-Chenchu Teachers:** Non-Chenchu teachers may be reluctant to work in Chenchu habitations or under Chenchu teachers, affecting the availability of quality education.

## Conclusion:

Despite the government's efforts, there is a significant need for community intervention and participation. Additionally, the involvement of various stakeholders in society is crucial for improving Chenchu education. Mere implementation of various education programs has not yielded significant results, and even if another seven decades were to pass, the commitment of teachers towards Chenchus remains a key factor that can drive greater results.

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