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361

A Comprehensive Analysis of the Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled Tribes: A Case Study of Jalgaon District

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Abstract

The socio-economic landscape of Scheduled Tribes (STs) presents a distinctive interplay of rich cultural heritage, traditional livelihoods, and the evolving pressures of modernization. This study centers on the tribal communities of Jalgaon district in Maharashtra, with a particular focus on their demographic patterns, economic engagements, educational attainment, healthcare access, and overall living standards. Jalgaon, renowned for its diverse tribal population, is home to communities such as the Pawra, Bhil, and Gond, primarily residing in the Satpura ranges and surrounding rural regions. Utilizing both primary and secondary data—including field surveys, interviews, and census records from 2001 and 2011—the research examines critical socio-economic indicators. Findings reveal that the majority of tribal households rely on subsistence agriculture, forest resources, and animal husbandry for their livelihood. Nonetheless, persistent challenges such as low literacy levels, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, poverty, and limited access to basic amenities continue to impede their holistic development. The study underscores the urgent need for targeted welfare initiatives that prioritize education, skill enhancement, and sustainable livelihood opportunities. It also advocates for the preservation of tribal cultural identity while promoting their integration into the broader economic framework. These insights aim to guide policymakers, researchers, and development practitioners in crafting inclusive and effective strategies for the upliftment of tribal communities in Jalgaon district.

Keywords: Scheduled Tribes, Socio-Economic Conditions, Jalgaon District

Introduction

Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India constitute a distinct socio-cultural group, characterized by unique traditions, customs, and indigenous livelihoods. In Maharashtra, the Jalgaon district is home to tribal communities such as the Pawra, Bhil, and Gond, who predominantly inhabit the Satpura ranges and surrounding rural areas. Their economic activities are primarily based on agriculture, forest produce, and animal husbandry, while their social fabric remains deeply intertwined with traditional practices and cultural heritage. Despite their rich legacy, these communities continue to face significant challenges, including poverty, low literacy rates, inadequate healthcare, and limited access to essential infrastructure. This study aims to critically examine the socio-economic conditions of Scheduled Tribes in Jalgaon district. It explores the key factors influencing their livelihood, education, and health outcomes, while also shedding light on the cultural dimensions that set them apart from other social groups. The research further seeks to offer actionable insights for policymakers and development agencies, emphasizing the need for inclusive welfare programs that enhance living standards, promote education and skill development, and ensure sustainable livelihood opportunities for these marginalized populations.

Study Area

Jalgaon District, located in the northwestern region of Maharashtra, represents the northernmost part of the state. Geographically, it spans between latitudes 20°00'N to 21°00'N and longitudes 74°55'E to 76°28'E, covering a total area of approximately 11,765 square kilometers. The district shares its northern boundary with Madhya Pradesh and its western boundary with Dhule district. A significant portion of Jalgaon lies within the Satpura mountain ranges, which shape both its terrain and socio-economic dynamics.

This study focuses on the tribal-dominated talukas of Chopda, Yawal, Raver, and Erandol, where the Pawra community is predominantly settled. Jalgaon is home to several Scheduled Tribe (ST) groups, including the Pawra, Bhil, and Gond, whose livelihoods are closely tied to agriculture, forest resources, and animal husbandry. The district's forests and topography play a vital role in shaping the economic and cultural life of these communities. This geographical and demographic context provides a foundation for analyzing the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in Jalgaon, particularly in relation to their cultural identity, livelihood patterns, and access to essential services.

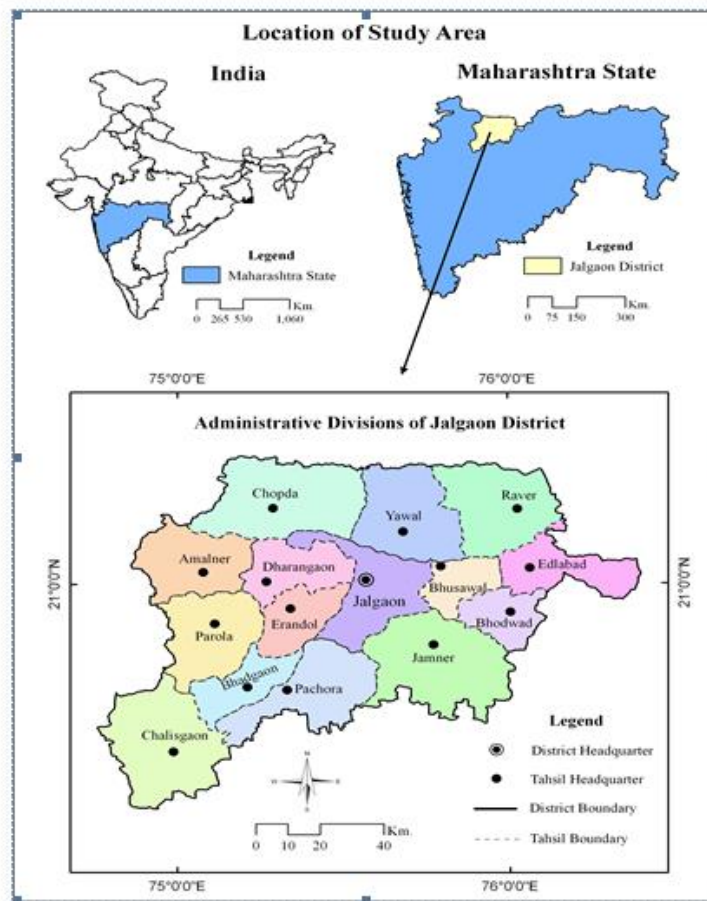


Fig. 1

AIMS & Objectives

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the socio-economic conditions of Scheduled Tribes in Jalgaon district with a focus on education, health, occupation, and income levels.
2. To study the demographic distribution and livelihood patterns of major tribal groups (Pawra, Bhil, and Gond) and identify the challenges they face in accessing basic infrastructure and resources.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources to examine the socio-economic conditions of Scheduled Tribes in Jalgaon district. Secondary data has been sourced from the Census of India (2001 and 2011), the District Gazetteer of Jalgaon, the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011, and reports published by the Tribal Research and Training Institute (TRTI), Pune.

Primary data was gathered through field surveys, personal interviews, and structured questionnaires conducted in tribal-dominated villages within the talukas of Chopda, Yawal, and Raver. Key socio-economic indicators—including literacy, health, occupation, and income—were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools and techniques. A comparative analysis was undertaken to assess regional disparities in living standards among tribal communities, providing a nuanced understanding of the challenges and variations across different geographic and social contexts.

Analysis of Data and Result

Surveying the entire Scheduled Tribe population of Jalgaon district is challenging due to its vast terrain. Hence, 300 families from Chopda, Yawal, Raver, and Erandol talukas, representing Bhil, Pawara, Tadvī, Vanjari, and Pardhi tribes, were selected through random sampling, ensuring equal representation of upper, middle, and lower classes. The study of human resources is vital from the point of view of economic welfare. It is particularly important because human beings are not only instruments of production but it's also ends in themselves. It is necessary to know in quantitative terms the number of people living in country at a particular time, the rate at which they are growing and the composition and distribution of population. The present point discussed about the various characteristic of sampled population as its composition, dependency ratio, growth, literacy etc. During the scheduled tribe survey of Jalgaon district we have sampled the population of 1382 persons, distributed in 300 families. In which female population is 657 and male population is 725 (Fig. 2). For analysis we have focused on many characteristics of the sampled population.

Table 1: Sample Population

Sex	Population
Female	657
Male	725
Total	1382

(Source: field survey, 2024)

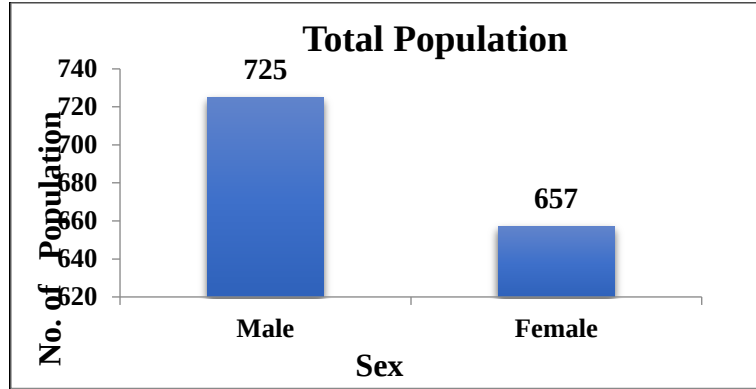


Fig. 2

Table 2: Age and Sex wise classification

Age	Male	Female	Total
0 to5	65	56	121
5to15	165	145	310
15to30	285	266	551
30to60	177	165	342
> 60	33	25	58
Total	725	657	1382

(Source: field survey, 2024)

The table 2 and fig. 3 is the age and sex wise classification of the scheduled tribe. As per survey it was observed that 551 populations belong to 15 to 30 years age group out of 285 male and 266 female; the second highest population belongs to 30 to 60 years age group out of 177 male and 165 female. Lowest population belong to above 60 year age group out of 33 male and 25 female. The bulk of the population is found in the age group of 15-30 and 30-60 years indicating availability working population. As per survey less population in the age group of 0-5 and 60 and above years, as there is less medical facility along with unhygienic condition and malnutrition tend to reduce the life expectancy of tribe. While the economic burden of children, awareness about family size and government policies have tend to reduce number of children per family.

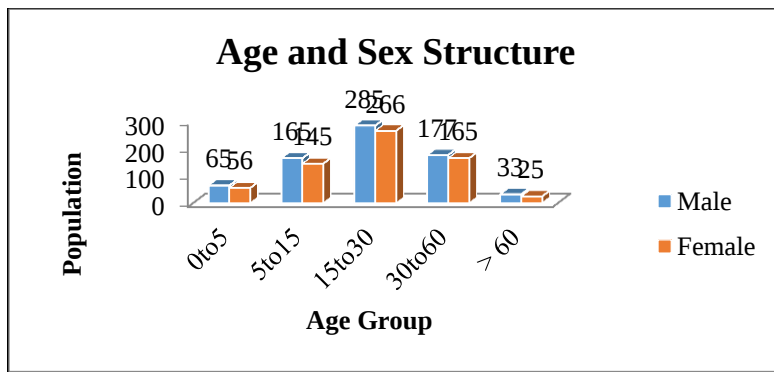


Fig. 3

Table 3: Dependency Ratio

Dependency Ratio	Male	Female	Total
Dependent	263	226	489
Independent	462	431	893
Total	725	657	1382

(Source: field survey, 2024)

The table 3 and fig. 4 is showing the dependency ratio is helpful in determining proportion of labour force in total population. It also helps us to understand about the ratio of dependant population to independent population. As per survey it is observed that 893 population under independent out of 462 male and 431 female populations. It is clear that male independent population is more than female population. Which indicates the availability of working force in the scheduled tribe in the district and it can be utilize for development of district and is good socio-economic indicator. It is also observed 489 populations under depend out of 263 male and 226 female populations.

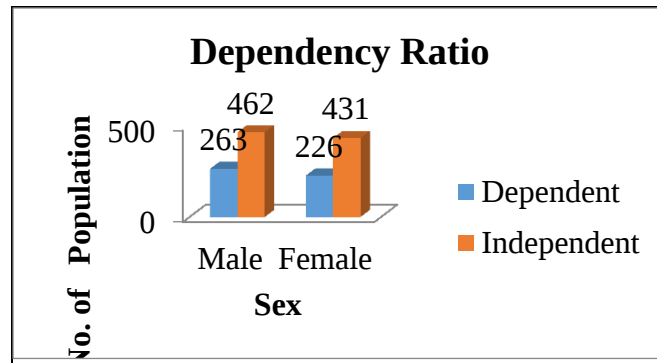


Fig. 4

Table 4: Literacy

Level of Education	Male	Female	Total
Pre-Primary	156	147	303
Primary	163	149	312
Secondary	169	151	320
High-Secondary	78	65	143
Graduation	23	13	36
Post Graduation	13	7	20
Illiterate	123	125	248
Total	725	657	1382

(Source: field survey, 2024)

Table 4 and fig. 5, reveals the data on literacy. According to survey it was observed that the level of literacy and education in scheduled tribe is low where high number of people educated up to the secondary school followed by illiterate people. The highest level of education is observed in secondary school i.e. 320 out of 169 male and 151 female population, followed by primary and pre-primary i.e. 312 (163 male and 149 female) and 303 (156 male and 147 female) population respectively. The female literacy rate is low as compare to the male population. The lowest level of education is observed in post graduate i.e. 20 populations out of 13 male and 7 female. As per the calculation it is observed that 91 % population is literate and 9% illiterate (fig 5). The female illiteracy (125) is more as compare to the male population (123).

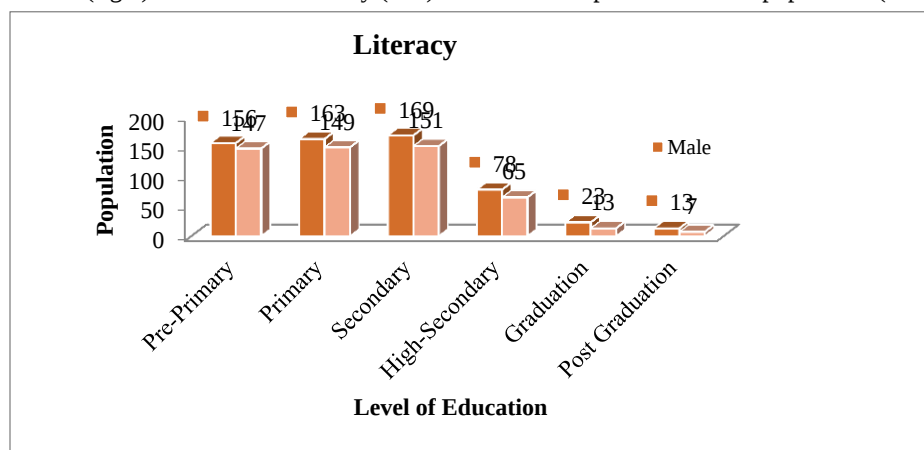


Fig. 5

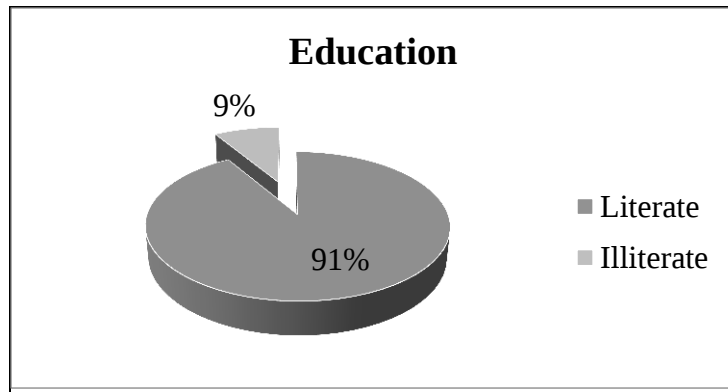


Fig. 6

Table 5: Caste

Caste	Families
Bhill	67
Pawara	55
Thadvi	60
Thakur	35
Vanjari	41
Korku	23
Pardhi	19
Total	300

(Source: field survey, 2024)

Table 5 and fig 7, is concerned to distribution of scheduled tribe caste. Above diagram shows the highest scheduled tribe population is in Bhill caste i.e. 67, followed by Thadvi caste i.e. 60 population and Pawara caste 55 population. The lowest population is in Pardhi caste i.e. 19 population. Caste is a form of social stratification characterized by endogamy, hereditary transmission of a style of life which often includes an occupation, ritual status in a hierarchy, and customary social interaction and exclusion based on cultural notions of purity and pollution. Its paradigmatic ethnographic example is the division of India's Hindu society into rigid social groups, with roots in India's ancient history and persisting until today. However, the economic significance of the caste system in India has been declining as a result of urbanization and affirmative action programs. A subject of much scholarship by sociologists and anthropologists, the Hindu caste system is sometimes used as an analogical basis for the study of caste-like social divisions existing outside Hinduism and India.

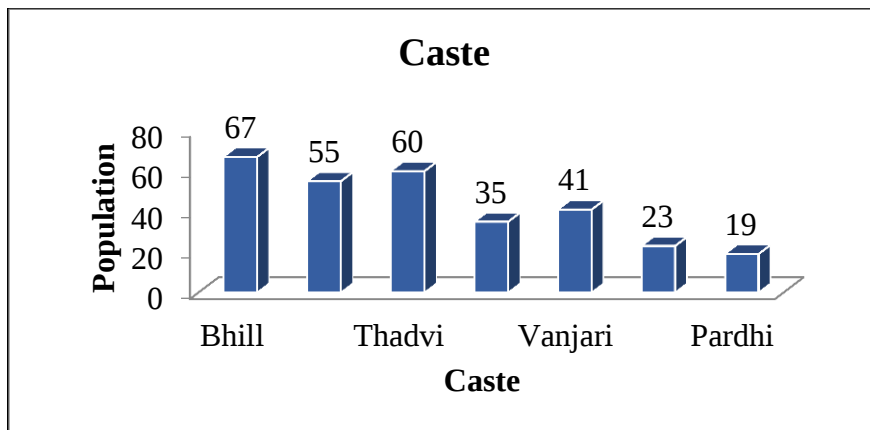


Fig. 7

Table 6: Types of Family

Types of Families	Population
Joint Families	195
Single Families	105
Total	300

(Source: field survey, 2024)

Family is the primary institute which deals with interaction of person with society and start socialized life of person. According to table 6 and fig 8, it is revealed that types of families in scheduled tribe. It is observed that 65% are joint families and 35% are single families in scheduled tribe.

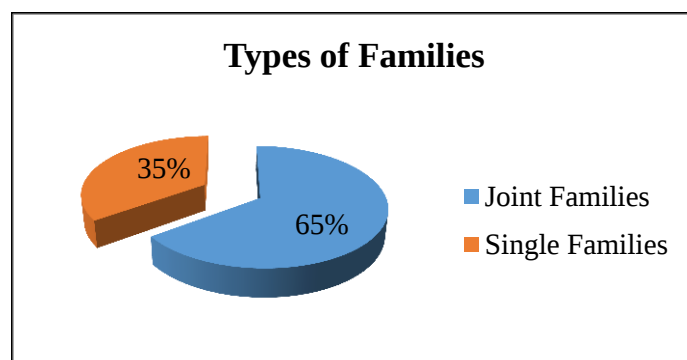


Fig. 8

Conclusion

The socio-economic survey of 300 tribal families comprising 1,382 individuals from Bhil, Pawara, Tadvi, Vanjari, and Pardhi tribes in Jalgaon district reveals significant demographic and social patterns. The population is predominantly youthful, with 40% (551 individuals) in the 15–30 years age group, indicating a strong working-age population. However, the low population in the 0–5 and 60+ age groups suggests low life expectancy and poor healthcare facilities due to malnutrition and unhygienic living conditions. The dependency ratio shows that 893 individuals are independent, with male independents (462) outnumbering females (431), reflecting the tribe's potential for labor-driven economic activities. Literacy levels remain modest, with the highest education level observed at the secondary school level (320 individuals), but only 20 individuals have attained postgraduate education. Female literacy is noticeably lower than male literacy, indicating the need for targeted educational initiatives. Caste-wise analysis shows the Bhil tribe is the largest group (67 families), followed by Tadvi (60) and Pawara (55), while Pardhi is the smallest (19 families). Family structure is predominantly joint (65%), emphasizing traditional social bonds and communal living. The findings highlight the need for improved healthcare, education, and economic opportunities to uplift the socio-economic conditions of these tribes while preserving their cultural heritage.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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