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Social Maturity Among Tribal Adolescents: A Study of Gender Differences and Family Structures

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Abstract

India is characterised by a diverse tapestry of castes, classes, religions, and languages. As a democratic nation, India provides opportunities for the development of all its citizens. However, certain groups remain marginalized, particularly tribal communities, who often follow traditional or primitive lifestyles and reside in remote regions of the country. Their interactions with other social groups are limited, which further contributes to their isolation from the mainstream. It is crucial for governments whether central or state to integrate these communities into the mainstream. In line with this goal, the researcher intends to evaluate the social maturity of tribal students and examine how gender and family type influence this aspect among students enrolled in government schools in Udham Singh Nagar district of Uttarakhand. A sample of 100 tribal students (54 girls and 46 boys) was randomly selected for this study. The findings indicate that the majority of tribal students exhibit an average level of social maturity. Notably, the impact of gender on social maturity was found to be statistically significant, revealing that girls encounter greater challenges in social adjustment compared to boys. In the dimensions of Cooperation, Social Commitment, and Openness to Change, girls scored lower than their male counterparts. Conversely, the family type did not show a significant effect on the students' social maturity. This study underscores the necessity for society to pay special attention to tribal communities, particularly focusing on the social development of tribal girls.

Keywords: Social maturity, diversity in India, scheduled tribe, tribes in Uttarakhand

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Introduction

Indian society is worldwide known for its diversity in caste, classes, religions and languages are spoken by people. Indian society was classified in different caste and class system from the years ago. Even today, people follow the path of different religions such as Hindu (79.80%), Muslim (14.23), Christian (2.30), Sikh (1.72), Buddhist (0.70), Jain (0.37), other religion (0.66) (Census 2011). There is a diversity that can be observed in the language, lifestyle, customs, and culture of people of India (Joshi, Gadgil, & Patil, 1993). The deprivation of different sections of society especially on the bases of gender, caste, socio-economic status, can easily be observed in Indian society.

After independence, it was the prime attempt of the Indian government to bring equity and equality in society. As a sovereign country, India has its own constitution. To eradicate segregation from the society and to provide equal opportunities to every citizen of the country, the Indian constitution has made many provisions for weaker sections especially for women, scheduled caste, scheduled tribes etc. The preamble of the Indian constitution depicts the determination of Indian intelligentsia. To accomplish their commitment, many efforts have been made by our central and state governments to create a society free from poverty and ignorance so that equal opportunities can be accessible to all citizens.

The efforts made by the government and the local bodies to uplift the overall status of the scheduled tribes is something this paper seeks to critically examine. The paper aims to explore how social maturity affected by the family type and to see is there any difference in social maturity of girls and boys. Central to this investigation are key questions: What are schedule tribes, and their challenges? What are the major tribes in Uttarakhand in what ways the social skills contribute to creating a reliable society and how this leads to a positive environment? What are the significant differences in social maturity of tribal male and female students.

Scheduled Tribe

The term tribe is defined as (sometimes offensive) a social group in a traditional society consisting of people with the same language, culture, religion, etc., living in a particular area and often having one leader known as a chief (Oxford Learner's Dictionary).

In the initial period, the tribal groups of India were recognized as indigenous or Adivasi. These communities with others were granted a limited franchise in the British period especially under the Government of India Acts 1919 and 1935. After independence, the Indian government gives them complete enfranchisement under the constitution of India. These 'Adivasi' communities were defined as 'Scheduled Tribe' in the Indian constitution. Article 366(25) defined scheduled tribes as such tribes or tribal

communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be scheduled tribes for the purpose of this constitution. Article 342 prescribed the procedure to be followed in a matter of specification of scheduled tribes.

Under clause (1) of Article 342, the president may with respect to any state or Union Territory, and where it is a state, after consultation with the governor thereof, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall, for the purposes of this constitution, is deemed to be scheduled tribes in relation to that State or Union Territory, as the case may be. It is an ongoing process to include any community to be listed in a scheduled tribe. The essential characteristics of any community to be listed in a scheduled tribe, first laid by the Lokur Committee (1965). These are (i) indication of primitive traits; (ii) distinctive culture; (iii) shyness in contact with the community at large; (iv) geographical isolation and backwardness. The tribal population is 10.43 crore that is 8.6% of the total population of India (Government of India, 2011). These tribal communities live in different states and union territories of India.

The Scheduled Tribe in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand is a hilly state in the north region of India. There are five tribal groups in Uttarakhand which have been notified as scheduled tribe in the Indian constitution namely Tharu, Buksa, Jonsari, Raji and Bhotiya. The total population of Uttarakhand is 10,086,292 in which 2.9% i.e. 2,91,903, is tribal population (Government of India, 2011). Tribal population belong to all the districts of Uttarakhand. District wise population of scheduled tribes is given in table-1 as follows.

Table 1

District-Wise Population of Scheduled Tribes

S.N.	District	Population	Percentage in the district
1	Udham Singh Nagar	1,23,037	7.46
2	Dehradun	1,11,663	6.58
3	Pithoragarh	19,535	4.09
4	Chamoli	12,260	3.13
5	Nainital	7,497	0.78
6	Haridwar	6,323	0.33
7	Uttarkashi	3,512	1.06
8	Paudi Garhwal	2,215	0.32
9	Bageshwar	1,982	0.76
10	Champawat	1,339	0.51
11	Almora	1,281	0.20

12	Tehri	875	0.14
13	Rudraprayag	386	1.60
Total (in Uttarakhand)		2,91,903	2.9%

Source: Census 2011

Social Maturity

Education serves as a crucial mechanism for instigating societal change. It fosters awareness among individuals regarding their rights and responsibilities. Through education, individuals acquire the necessary skills to contribute meaningfully to society and to benefit from social programs and policies aimed at their personal advancement. Education enables individuals to realize their full potential and facilitates comprehensive development of the learner.

In the current context, the significance of social skills surpasses other developmental aspects, as the world has transformed into a global village. Our interdependence for various needs has become increasingly evident. In domains such as science, technology, and medicine, nations rely on one another. The collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic exemplified how countries united to combat a common challenge. Consequently, it is crucial for our youth to understand the value of social skills and the sense of community that accompanies them.

Many studies have proven the relevance of social maturity, social skills, and social competency in ensuring a person's success in all aspects of life (Sharma, Goswami, and Gupta, 2016). A 20-year retrospective study by the Wood Johnson Foundation (2015) found that children with social competency features, such as sharing, cooperation, or helping other youngsters, may be more likely to reach higher schooling and well-paying professions. A person with a high level of social maturity and social skills has a better chance of living a healthy and happy adult life. Social maturity enables a person to form good social relationships and communicate effectively with other members of society. A socially mature person exhibits characteristics such as group compatibility, compassion, empathy, emotional adaptability, civility, cooperation, leadership, and cheerfulness, all of which contribute to good psychological and physical health. It assists a person in making better life adjustments and obtaining success.

It is expected to all members of society behave in a socially accepted manner and fulfil social standards of behaviour. To behave in a socially accepted manner, to be aware of social functions and social changes, social communication etc. all characteristics comprises in the term 'Social Maturity'. Social maturity is a level of social skills and awareness that an individual has achieved relative to norms related to a group. It is a measure of the development competence of an individual about interpersonal relation behaviour, appropriateness, social problem solving and judgment (Raj,1996).

The significance of this aspect of life is particularly pronounced among tribal communities. These marginalized populations encounter challenges in social engagement. For a nation's progress, it is imperative to provide equitable opportunities for all societal segments to participate in the social mainstream. Nevertheless, certain marginalized groups within our society require focused attention. Tribal communities represent a marginalized demographic, particularly in the realms of education, economic advancement, and social representation (Roy & Roy, 2016).

Research indicates that tribal youth encounter numerous challenges related to social adjustment, exhibiting both limited cognitive skills and average social maturity (Kumari and Sood, 2022). Despite the efforts of government initiatives and various non-governmental organizations aimed at integrating these marginalized communities into the broader societal framework, numerous studies highlight ongoing difficulties in social participation, revealing that these groups remain significantly behind in social engagement. They continue to be distanced from mainstream society (Pradhan, 2010).

Numerous studies are currently being undertaken to investigate the factors contributing to the underdevelopment of marginalized groups. Malyadri (2012) identified a significant reason for the ineffectiveness of various developmental initiatives within society as the widespread presence of severe illiteracy and ignorance, coupled with superstitions prevalent among rural populations. He further asserted that the promotion of education is considered one of the most effective and progressive strategies to combat economic backwardness and social deprivation. Education is posited to be instrumental in fostering the comprehensive development of individuals.

To evaluate the social maturity levels of school-aged tribal adolescents, Samhitha, Sreedevi, Sarada Devi, and Rani (2019) conducted a study in the Adilabad District of Telangana. The researchers employed a purposive random sampling method to select a sample of 120 adolescents, comprising 60 boys and 60 girls. The findings revealed that a majority of the tribal students (77%) exhibited a moderate level of social maturity, while only 23% achieved a high level of social maturity. The investigators also assessed social maturity across various dimensions of the scale and found that most tribal students fell within the moderate range of social maturity.

Samhitha and Sreedevi (2020) reported that the family environment significantly influences the social maturity of tribal adolescent students. Their research elucidated the ways in which elements such as freedom, indulgence, trust, and warmth within the family context foster the social maturity of tribal students in Adilabad, Telangana.

Actovin, Krishnakumar & Kumar (2023) reported that students from tribal communities encounter numerous challenges related to social adjustment. This qualitative research focuses on tribal students who have relocated from their homeland to pursue higher education. The findings highlighted critical issues regarding social integration and

acquiring practical knowledge necessary for life in a non-native environment. Some other aspects of family effect the social maturity of these tribal people.

Kumari and Sood (2022) conducted a descriptive survey study involving tribal students in Himachal Pradesh, revealing that gender does not significantly influence the life skills of these marginalized individuals. The findings indicated that while all tribal students exhibited low levels of thinking skills, they demonstrated average levels of both social and emotional skills.

Sing, Mohakud, Kisku, and Khan, (2023) conducted a research study aimed at exploring the influence of gender and familial factors—such as family structure, sibling count, and parental occupation—on the social adjustment of tribal students in Bengal. Their findings indicated that female tribal students encounter greater challenges in social adjustment compared to their male counterparts. Furthermore, the study highlighted a significant impact of family structure, revealing that tribal students from joint families exhibit better social adjustment than those from nuclear families. Additionally, a positive correlation was identified between the educational level and occupation of fathers and the social adjustment of tribal students.

In present study, the researcher has selected tribal adolescent students of Udham Singh Nagar. In the district we have tribal communities like Tharu and Buksa. The researcher tried to assess the social maturity level of these tribal adolescent students.

Objectives of the study

- To assess the level of social maturity of tribal adolescent students.
- To compare the level of social maturity of tribal adolescent girls and boys.
- To compare the level of social maturity of tribal adolescent students in relation to their type of family.

Hypotheses

Two major hypotheses were framed for this study.

H01 There is no significant difference in social maturity of tribal girls and boys.

H02 There is no significant difference in social maturity of tribal adolescent students of nuclear and joint family.

The sub-hypotheses for the first major hypothesis are as follows:

1. There is no significant difference between tribal girls and boys adolescent students with reference to the work orientation dimension of social maturity.
2. There is no significant difference between tribal girls and boys adolescent students with reference to self-directions dimension of social maturity.
3. There is no significant difference between tribal girls and boys adolescent students with reference to the ability to take the stress dimension of social maturity.
4. There is no significant difference between tribal girls and boys adolescent students

with reference to the communication dimension of social maturity.

5. There is no significant difference between tribal girls and boys adolescent students with reference to the enlightened trust dimension of social maturity.
6. There is no significant difference between tribal girls and boys adolescent students with reference to the cooperation dimension of social maturity.
7. There is no significant difference between tribal girls and boys adolescent students with reference to the social commitment dimension of social maturity.
8. There is no significant difference between tribal girls and boys adolescent students with reference to the social tolerance dimension of social maturity.
9. There is no significant difference between tribal girls and boys adolescent students with reference to openness to change the dimension of social maturity.

The sub-hypotheses for the second major hypothesis are as follows:

1. There is no significant difference in work orientation dimension of social maturity of tribal adolescent students with reference to their type of family.
2. There is no significant difference in self-directions dimension of social maturity of tribal adolescent students with reference to their type of family.
3. There is no significant difference in ability to take the stress dimension of social maturity of tribal adolescent students with reference to their type of family.
4. There is no significant difference in communication dimension of social maturity of tribal adolescent students with reference to their type of family.
5. There is no significant difference in enlightened trust dimension of social maturity of tribal adolescent students with reference to their type of family.
6. There is no significant difference in cooperation dimension of social maturity of tribal adolescent students with reference to their type of family.
7. There is no significant difference in social commitment dimension of social maturity of tribal adolescent students with reference to their type of family.
8. There is no significant difference in social tolerance dimension of social maturity of tribal adolescent students with reference to their type of family.
9. There is no significant difference in openness to change dimension of social maturity of tribal adolescent students with reference to their type of family.

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey method was used for the present study. In the present study, tribal adolescent students studying in class 11th and 12th in government schools of Udham Singh Nagar are defined as population of the study. Four schools were selected from Bajpur, Sitarganj, and Nanakmatta blocks of Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand by purposive sampling technique. A sample of 100 tribal adolescents (54 Girls, 46 Boys), included in the study, was selected by simple random sampling technique.

SMS (Social Maturity Scale): The social maturity scale developed by Rao, (1986) was used to collect the data from the selected sample. Personal data schedule was developed by the researcher to check the family background of the students. The social maturity scale was administered to the respondents in groups in a regular classroom situation. Necessary instructions were given to the subjects and were asked to respond in a specified time.

Gender, type of family were treated as independent variable while social maturity was assessed as a dependent variable.

The following statistical techniques were used for data analysis.

The central tendency as Mean, SD, and t-ratio was calculated to compare the mean scores of tribal students.

Results and Discussion

The objectives of the study were to assess the level of social maturity of tribal girls and boys and to compare them with reference to their gender and type of family. The raw scores were converted into z-scores according to the manual of the tool. Percentage analysis of the social maturity among tribal girls is as follows.

Table 2

Percentage Analysis of Social Maturity Among Tribal girl students

Category	Average Level of Social Maturity (-0.50 to +0.50)		Above Average level of Social Maturity (+0.51 to +1.25)	
Tribal Girls	Number of students	% of the students	Number of students	% of the students
	49	91%	5	9%

Table 2 shows that majority of girls i.e. 91% fall under the range of average level of social maturity. Only 9% tribal girls demonstrated to above average level of social maturity. It can be depicted through Diagram 1.

Figure 1

Social Maturity Among Tribal Girls

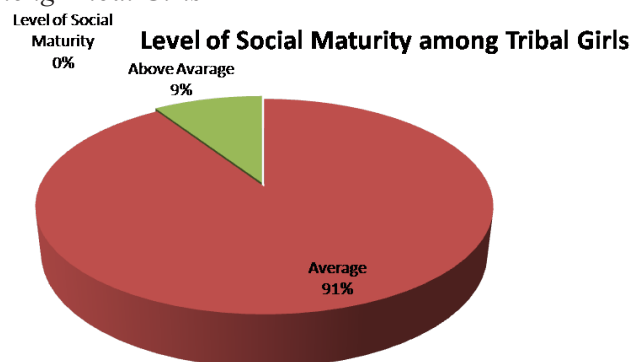


Table 3

Percentage Analysis of Social Maturity Among Tribal Boys Students

Category	Average Level of Social Maturity (-0.50 to +0.50)		Above Average level of Social Maturity (+0.51 to +1.25)	
Tribal boys	Number of students	% of the students	Number of students	% of the students
	31	67.39%	15	32%

Table 3 shows the level of social maturity of boys on the basis of their z-score. It reveals that 67.39 % of the boys belong to the average level of social maturity and 32 % falls under the range of above average level of social maturity. It is also described with help of Diagram 2.

Figure 2

Social Maturity Among Tribal Boys

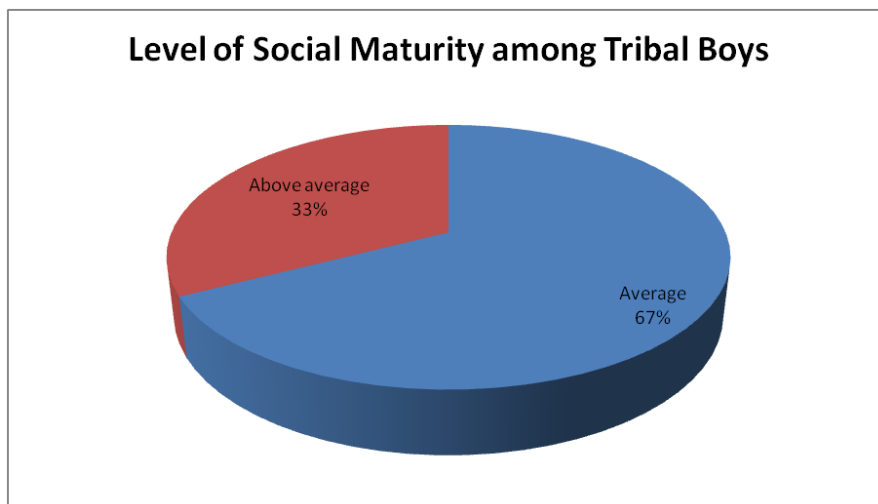


Table 4

Percentage Analysis of Social Maturity Among Tribal Students of Joint Family

Category	Average Level of Social Maturity (-0.50 to +0.50)		Above Average level of Social Maturity (+0.51 to +1.25)	
Tribal students of Joint family	Number of students	% of the students	Number of students	% of the students
	33	71%	13	28.26%

Table 4 shows social maturity of tribal students in relation to their type of family. 71% tribal students who belongs to joint family, scored average level of social maturity

and 28% tribal students falls under above average level of social maturity. Pai diagram for this data has presented as follows.

Figure 3

Social Maturity Among Tribal Students of Joint Family

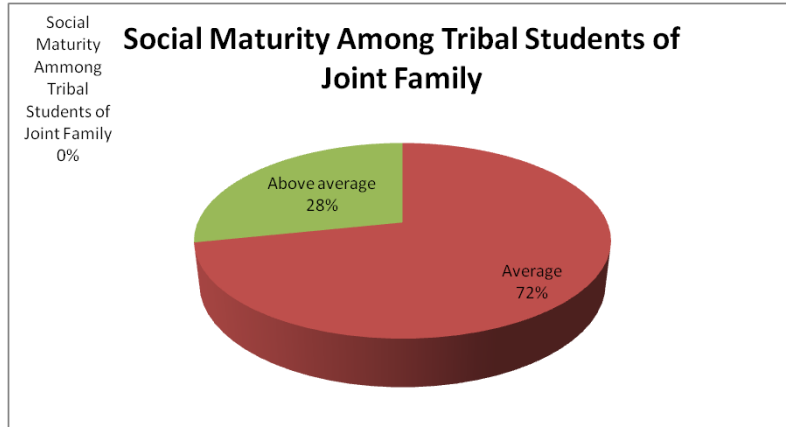


Table 5

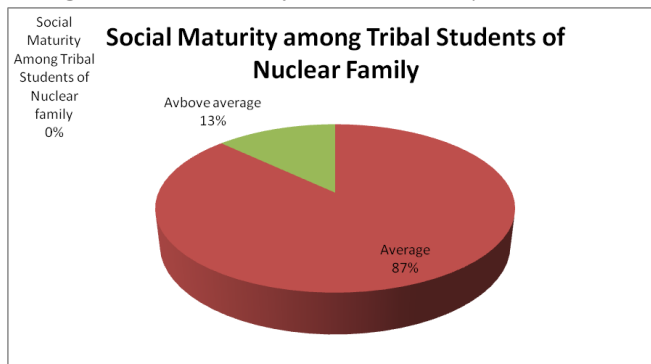
Percentage Analysis of Social Maturity Among Tribal Students of Nuclear family

Category	Average Level of Social Maturity (-0.50 to +0.50)		Above Average level of Social Maturity (+0.51 to +1.25)	
Tribal students of nuclear family	Number of students	% of the students	Number of students	% of the students
	47	87%	7	12.96%

Table 5 shows social maturity level of tribal students who belong to nuclear family. Majority of the students i.e. 87% belong to average level of social maturity and only 12% students get above average level score in social maturity scale. The result is presented in the following diagram.

Figure 4

Social Maturity Among Tribal Students of Nuclear Family



To compare the level of social maturity of tribal students and to find significant difference among them on the basis of their gender and type of family, two major hypotheses were framed by the researcher. Gender wise comparison has presented in the following Table 6.

H01 There is no significant difference in social maturity of tribal girls and boys.

Table 6

Social Maturity of Tribal Girls and Boys

Group	N	M	S.D.	't'	Significance level (0.05)
Tribal Girls	54	19.14	2.48	3.16	Significant
Tribal Boys	46	27.52	3.97	(df=98)	

The table presented above illustrates the social maturity levels of tribal girls and boys. The calculated 't' value, which stands at 3.16 with 98 degrees of freedom, is significant at the 0.05 level. The mean scores for tribal girls and boys are 19.14 and 27.52, respectively, indicating a noticeable difference between the two groups. The standard deviation for the first group is 2.48, while for the second group, it is 3.97. This data confirms a significant difference in social maturity between tribal girls and boys, as the obtained 't' value of 3.16 exceeds the critical 't' value of 1.98 at the 0.05 significance level for 98 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which posits no significant difference in social maturity between tribal girls and boys based on gender, is rejected. It is evident that tribal boys achieve significantly higher scores on the social maturity scale.

To investigate the dimension wise difference in social maturity of tribal girls and boys, nine sub- null hypotheses were framed for the first major hypothesis. Dimension wise analysis has presented in the following table.

Table 7

Dimension wise analysis of social maturity of tribal girls and boys

Dimensions of Social Maturity	Group	N	M	S.D.	't'	Significance level (0.05)
Work Orientation	Girls	54	30.07	3.93	0.28	Insignificant
	boys	46	30.30	4.12	(df=98)	
Self-direction	Girls	54	22.75	4.16	1.93	Insignificant
	Boys	46	24.10	2.46	(df=98)	
Ability to take the stress	Girls	54	17.77	2.52	1.80	Insignificant
	boys	46	18.65	2.32	(df=98)	

Communication	Girls	54	28.55	3.18	0.53	Insignificant
	Boys	46	28.89	3.10	(df=98)	
Enlightened trust	Girls	54	24.92	2.80	0.48	Insignificant
	Boys	46	25.19	2.74	(df=98)	
Cooperation	Girls	54	20.07	2.26	3.89	Significant
	Boys	46	22.00	2.69	(df=98)	
Social commitment	Girls	54	29.33	2.84	2.82 (df=98)	Significant
	Boys	46	30.95	2.89		
Social tolerance	Girls	54	24.90	3.48	0.72	Insignificant
	Boys	46	25.41	3.58	(df=98)	
Openness to Change	Girls	54	20.74	2.59	2.25	Significant
	Boys	46	22.00	2.99	(df=98)	

A comparison of tribal boys and girls across various aspects of social maturity reveals significant differences, as illustrated in Table 7. The findings indicate that boys outperform girls in the dimensions of cooperation, social commitment, and openness to change. Specifically, the t value for cooperation is 3.89 (df=98), which is significant at the 0.05 level. Similarly, the t values for social commitment and openness to change are 2.82 (df=98) and 2.25 (df=98), respectively, both of which are also significant at the 0.05 level. These results suggest that tribal boys exhibit a higher level of social maturity compared to their female counterparts.

To assess the third objective of the study, a major hypothesis was framed by the researcher whether there is any significant difference in social maturity of tribal students who belong to nuclear and joint family or not. The comparison has presented in the Table 8.

H02 There is no significant difference in social maturity of tribal adolescent students of nuclear and joint family.

Table 8

Social Maturity of Tribal students in relation to their type of Family

Group	N	M	S.D.	't'	Significance level (0.05)
Nuclear family	54	222.24	13.24	0.59	Insignificant
Joint Family	46	223.89	14.47	(df=98)	

The table presented above indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between tribal students from nuclear families and those from joint families. Although the mean score for students from joint families (223.89) exceeds that of their

counterparts from nuclear families (222.24), the calculated t value of 0.59 (df=98) does not reach significance at the 0.05 level. A detailed analysis by dimension is provided in Table 9.

Table 9

Dimension wise analysis of social maturity of tribal students in reference to their family type

Dimensions of Social Maturity	Group	N	M	S.D.	't'	Significance level(0.05)
Work Orientation	Nuclear family	54	30.31481	3.648851	-0.363	Insignificant
	Joint Family	46	30.02174	4.419598		
Self-direction	Nuclear family	54	23.64815	3.234002	-0.820 (df=98)	Insignificant
	Joint Family	46	23.06522	3.872422		
Ability to take the stress	Nuclear family	54	18.2963	2.446635	-0.510 (df=98)	Insignificant
	Joint Family	46	18.04348	2.494051		
Communication	Nuclear family	54	28.5	3.385597	0.724 (df=98)	Insignificant
	Joint Family	46	28.95652	2.828086		
Enlightened trust	Nuclear family	54	24.92593	3.002212	0.484 (df=98)	Insignificant
	Joint Family	46	25.19565	2.48211		
Cooperation	Nuclear family	54	21.14815	2.413855	-0.771 (df=98)	Insignificant
	Joint Family	46	20.73913	2.893938		
Social commitment	Nuclear family	54	29.66667	3.071476	1.519 (df=98)	Insignificant
	Joint Family	46	30.56522	2.794059		

Social tolerance	Nuclear family	54	24.53704	3.750285	1.880 (df=98)	Insignificant
	Joint Family	46	25.84783	3.119597		
Openness toChange	Nuclear family	54	21.2037	2.557856	0.442 (df=98)	Insignificant
	Joint Family	46	21.45652	3.167239		

Table 9 indicated that family type does not exert a significant impact on different aspects of social maturity. It can be inferred that the traditional notion of a joint family, which historically comprised 20 to 30 members cohabiting, has evolved. Currently, joint families are typically smaller, often consisting of only two generations residing together. This shift may account for the observed lack of significant differences in social maturity between students from nuclear families and those from joint families.

Conclusion

Social development is a crucial component of personality development that supports us as we navigate life's challenges. Equal opportunities for the marginalised groups in our society are crucial for their overall development. Many researchers (Samhitha, Sreedevi, 2020; Actovin, Krishnakumar & Kumar, 2023) have identified issues faced by marginalised populations. Some studies identified the health problems and unequal development among tribal people (Rajpoot, Kumar, & Sharma, 2016, Sahani (2014)). Tribal populations in India face significant inequities in maternal child health, education, health insurance, and overall empowerment, highlighting the need for more sophisticated interventions (Manna, Gupta, Sanchaya, & Garg, 2022).

In Uttarakhand as well these marginalized groups face number of challenges in the field of education, health, development and social adjustment. Tribal communities in Uttarakhand have not fully benefited from development processes, with indicators like demography, sex ratio, education, health, employment, and employment status showing disparities. Sahani (2014) indicated that the unrealistic economic transition experienced by the Jaunsari, Bhotiya, and Raji tribes of Uttarakhand poses significant threats to sustainability. This transition jeopardizes their traditional practices, which are integral to their unique cultural identities.

These differences demonstrate the necessity for the government, society, and other welfare organisations to provide marginalised persons more attention. With this requirement in mind, the researcher attempted to evaluate the social maturity of these tribal pupils and discovered that their level is average. A small percentage of the pupils showed a high degree of social maturity. Results indicate that girls experience greater

difficulties with social adjustment, and that they perform significantly worse than boys overall on the social maturity scale in several dimensions, including cooperation, social commitment, and openness to change. Numerous research (Singh S., 2023) that found tribal girls faced more social problems than boys did confirmed this conclusion.

The results of these research highlight the need for policymakers to give these marginalised groups special consideration. These tribal people's development may be significantly impacted by education. Although many programs and scholarships are awarded to these marginalised individuals, society still needs to show extra care. It is only then that these individuals will be equally represented in every sphere of our society.

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