

Anganwadi as a Centre for Pre-School Education: It's Impact on Education and Health of Tribal Children of Madhya Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

An Anganwadi centre is the best place for children to learn. It provides pre-school education to children in the age group of 3 - 6 years through joyful activities based on play. Children who have attended pre-primary schools or Anganwadi centres typically learn material fast compared to a formal system and through social interaction with other children and it helps early grades of primary education. Anganwadi Centre provides both nutrition and education to children through early childhood care and education. In the rural and tribal areas, the Anganwadi centres develop the learning capacity and introduce the children to the primary school environment as well. Exploring through secondary sources and data, the paper critically examines the impact of Anganwadi centres in reducing the school dropout rate and enrolment in primary schools and improving the health of tribal children

Keywords: AWCs, School dropout, Primary education, ICDS, Tribal children, Pre-school education

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a powerful instrument for the development of any individual or community. Madhya Pradesh is a tribal-dominated state having 21.6% of total population and 46 tribal groups in the state. At present, tribes are away from education because language is one of the barriers to the development of tribal education. Tribal children receive schooling in their own language through Anganwadi centres. In New Education Policy 2020, the period of early childhood care and education has been increased from 3 to 8 years. There will be Anganwadi preschool "Balvatika" for the child in the age group of 3 to 6 years in the foundational stage. In the foundational stage of 6 to 8 years, the child will go to class 1 and class 2. Anganwadi centres have to be strengthened with the highest



Suggested Citation:

Sahoo, R. H. & Kewat, N. (2023). Anganwadi as a Centre for Pre-School Education: Its Impact on Education and Health of Tribal Children of Madhya Pradesh, *Journal of Studies in Dynamics and Change (JSDC)*, 10(3), 1-14.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10693948>

Published on: 01 July 2023

infrastructure and trained Anganwadi teachers in order to ensure all children have access to early childhood care and education. The Government of India started the Integrated Child Development Services program on 2nd Oct 1975. Integrated Child Development Services scheme (ICDS) is a centrally sponsored program of the Government of India under the Ministry of Women and Child Development department. The scheme was launched in the country against the high level of morbidity, infant mortality rate, and nutrition-related diseases and low literacy rate, which was millions for below six years of children. The Anganwadi plays an important role in reducing malnutrition among children and increasing the health, nutrition and learning opportunities of Pre-school education. Integrated Child Development Service was formed in India to improve the level of health and nutrition of children and keeping in mind the mental development of children, preschool education was ensured to the children below six years of age through Anganwadi centres.

Integrated Child Development Services aims to ensure holistic development and proper dietary needs of women and children. ICDS has improved the nutritional status of children through the Anganwadi workers along with the support of an Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) worker. The Ministry of Women and Child Development implemented POSHAN Abhiyaan to reduce malnutrition. The Women and Child Development department launched on 25 December 2014 Mission Indra Dhanush for vaccination in children; therefore, Anganwadi has reduced the rate of malnutrition among children to a great extent. Gagholati et al (2006) studied the association between malnutrition and performance in Integrated Child Development Services. They found that there are six types of services provided at Anganwadi in which beneficiaries utilized nutritional and vaccination-related health services. The enrollment of children in the Anganwadi centres is high, which has improved their health. The ICDS supports the most marginalized sections of the population and deprived areas, tribal areas and urban slums in particular (Nayak & Saxena, 2006).

Kapil (2002) study concluded that Integrated Child Development Schemes play an important role in the holistic development of children. With the help of the ICDS program, the Government of India has improved the nutritional and health status below 6 years of children, lactating mothers, pregnant mothers, and adolescent girls. The ICDS service provides early childhood care, supplementary nutrition, and health check-up with the help of Anganwadi workers and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANM). Anuradha et al. (2003) concluded that preschool children of Anganwadi with better infrastructure facilities attained a good level of physical, mental, and language development, whereas, Anganwadi with poorer infrastructure facilities have not shown better performance.

Madhya Pradesh is tribal dominated state, where despite providing free and compulsory education and early childhood care and education to rural and tribal children since 2001, the school dropout rate is the highest among children. In this study an attempt is made to know to what extent the Anganwadi centre has played a role in promoting health and primary education.

II. OBJECTIVES

- To critically examine the role of Anganwadi for growth of pre-school education among tribal children in Madhya Pradesh
- To study the impact of Anganwadi upon health and nutrition among tribal children of Madhya Pradesh

Children are the valuable human resources of a nation, so they need a conducive and congenial environment for their development into good citizens. Pre-school education is an important step in the direction of the promotion of the child's growth. It has a significant impact on the manner in which a child develops their intelligence, social skills, and personality. The rate of intellectual development is highest during the early years of a child and most of the personal and social habits are developed before the age of six. It is during this time that the foundations for later development are laid. Preschool centres in India are called Anganwadis, Balwadis, Sishuvihar, Nursery schools, Montessori. All these serve and care for children before entry into primary school (Shabnam, 2003).

Anganwadi centres are running all over the country under the ICDS scheme of Government of India. Preschool educational intervention programmes for the children 3-6 years of age groups. It aims to improve the child's survival rate as well as bring improvement in nutrition, health and educational status of pre-school children and their mothers (shubnam, 2008). The scheme plays an important role in reducing malnutrition among children and increasing the health nutrition and learning opportunities of pre-school education and it also provides health and nutrition facilities to pregnant women and lactating mothers. ICDS program important for early childhood care and education for 3-6 years of children. Early childhood care and education is a backbone component of ICDS program. ICDS program provides pre-school education services for 3-6 years old children in Anganwadis through the medium of play and providing a learning environment for promotion of social, emotional and cognitive development (Singh, 1987).

III. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Anganwadi

Anganwadi is a child care centre located within the village or slum. Anganwadi is run by an Anganwadi worker and assisted by an anganwadi helper. Under the ICDS scheme, the Anganwadi worker serves as a multifaceted agent of change who is appointed from the community and provides a direct means of communicating with mothers and children.

Pre-school Education

Children in the age group of 3-6 years require specific learning opportunities in the non-formal manner. Anganwadi provides Early Childhood Care and Education through play-based activities which stimulate cognitive and motor development and satisfy the curiosity of the children. Children learn the concept of learning and understanding various issues and the surroundings which form the basis for a sound primary school.

The term pre-school education usually refers to the arrangement of education before primary school. The basic structure of school education in India facilitates the child to join into primary school at the age of six years (NEP, 1986). Shabnam (2006) remarked "Pre-school education is informal education of the child between the age group 3-6 years carried out in formal institutions before the child joins the formal classes".

It is a major community development program important for early childhood care. The scheme was started on an experimental basis in 33 projects with 4,891 Anganwadi centres. In 1992, the program covered 2,461 of a total of 5,153 tribal Community Development Blocks in the country (NIPCCD, 1992). After 44 year it has extension and there are 7,076 Project in the country where, 14 lakh Anganwadi centres established as well as, it include the provision of 2000 AWCs on demand (Reports 2021, NITI Ayog).



Anganwadis a child care centre, which functions with the Anganwadi worker with the help of assistants in villages or slums. Anganwadi helper brings children to provide services to the centre from home. Anganwadi workers provide Take home ration and food to children. Anganwadi worker is the front line worker of the health and education systems and is located in the same village as her. Anganwadi workers are guided by a team of project-level supervisors, Child Development Project Officers. The supervisor is responsible for 20-25 Anganwadi centres. She guides the Anganwadi workers and assists her in office record keeping, home visits and organizing community meetings.

Table-1: Progress in Implementation of Anganwadis Services Scheme in India

Year Ending	No. of Operational		No. of Beneficiaries (in lakhs)	
	Projects	AWCs	Supplementary Nutrition Program	Pre-School Education
31.03.2017	7074	1354792	983.42	340.52
31.03.2018	7075	1363021	892.77	325.91
31.03.2019	7075	1372872	875.61	301.92
31.03.2020	7075	1381376	855.05	245.04
31.03.2021	7075	1387432	831.83	230.38

Source: Annual Report Ministry of Women and Child Development 2021-22

Table-1 reveals the statistical data of implementation of Anganwadi services in the country from the year 2017 to 2021. Though the number of projects from 2018 to 2021 remain constant, the number of AWCs has increased significantly. So it can be anticipated that from year 2017 to 2021, special attention has been given to supplementary nutrition program while pre-school education is being given nominal attention by Integrated Child Development of Services.

Objectives of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) of India

ICDS is a centrally sponsored scheme which is implemented by state and UTs with the following objectives:

- To improve the health and nutritional status of children under six years of age group
- To build the foundation for proper psychological, social and physical growth of the child.
- To reduce the incidence of morbidity, mortality, malnutrition and school drop-out.
- To achieve effective coordination of policy and implementation amongst the different departments to improve child development.
- To promote the capability of the mother to look after the normal nutrition and health needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education (<http://icds-wcd.nic.in/icds.aspx>)

Package of Six Services provided by ICDS

It provides the following services for beneficiary's women and their children.

- Nutrition and health education to women

- Immunization
- Supplementary Nutrition
- Health check-up
- Pre-school educations (to children in the age group of 3-6 years)
- Referral services

Anganwadi worker is the front-line worker of the health and education systems and is located in the same village as her. Anganwadi workers are guided by a team of project-level supervisors, Child Development Project Officers. The supervisor is responsible for 20-25 Anganwadi centres. She guides the Anganwadi workers and assists her in office record keeping, home visits and organizing community meetings. Singh remarked “Pre-school education has been used to refer to group settings for children between three and five years old which are deliberately designed to stimulate and support their mental, physical, emotional, language, and social development, etc.

Earlier ICDS centres covered a population of 1000 in rural and urban areas and 700 in tribal and hilly areas. Under the direction of the supreme court of India in 2004 population norms for sanctioning AWCs were relaxed. The revised norm consists of one Anganwadi centre per 800 populations in rural/urban areas and 500 populations in tribal areas. (Gupta et.al, 2013) One Anganwadi centre caters 400-800 rural/urban dwellers and 300-800 tribal people. A mini Anganwadi centre caters to the needs of children in case the population is 150-400.

The pre-school education in Madhya Pradesh has been implemented under the Integrated Child Development Scheme by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. At the initial stage, in 1975 first ICDS project was opened in the Waidhan Development Block of Singrauli district of Madhya Pradesh after that the program was gradually expanded to the whole of Madhya Pradesh. All these responsibilities of Anganwadi centres are performed by Anganwadi teachers in the form of six integrated child development services (Notification PSE Policy, n.d.).

Madhya Pradesh is a tribal dominated region where 21.6 percentage of the total population is tribal, therefore, our Indian constitution under the article 45 provides free and compulsory education for early childhood and care and education policy formulated for most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

For the purpose of implementing Section 11 of the Right to Free and Compulsory Child Education Act 2009 and the provision of the National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy 2013, has been made on 18 April 2022 in the form of Pre-School Education Policy Madhya Pradesh, 2022. The main objective of the policy is to ensure access with equity, of pre-school education.

Table-2: Number of ICDS Projects in Madhya Pradesh

Types of Project	Number of ICDS Projects	Number of Sectors	Number of Anganwadis
Rural	278	2090	51558
Urban	73	348	963
Tribal	102	963	24004
All	453	3401	97135

Sources: www.mpcdmis.gov.in



Table-2 shows that the Integrated Child Development Services currently run 61 % in rural areas, 16% in urban areas, and 23% in tribal areas of the Madhya Pradesh. Mostly Anganwadi centres are running under ICDS project in tribal and rural areas of Madhya Pradesh. Due to the running of Anganwadi centres in rural and tribal areas, the holistic development of underprivileged children has improved to a great extent.

Table-3: Number of Anganwadi Centres in Madhya Pradesh

Area Wise Project	No. of Projects	No. of Main AWCs	No of Mini AWCs
Rural	278	51558	8430
Tribal	102	24004	4013
Urban	73	8903	227
Total	453	84465	12670

Sources: www.mpcdmis.gov.in

Table-3 shows that the in Madhya Pradesh main-Anganwadi centres are running in rural and tribal areas respectively 61% and 28% and mini-Anganwadi centres are running in rural and tribal areas 66% and 32%. Therefore, it shows that maximum benefit is being taken from the services provided by Anganwadi centres in rural and tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh.

Table-4: Percentage of Children 3-6 Year Attending Pre-School Education in Madhya Pradesh

	Residence			Social Category			
	Total	Rural	Urban	SC	ST	OBC	Others
Anganwadi Centre	37.8	44.4	20.1	39.2	50.2	35.6	19.1
Private Institution	27.4	18.4	51.7	27.2	11.6	32.4	41.7
Not Attending	25.5	27.6	19.9	25.8	30.2	22.2	26.1

Source: Rapid Survey on Children as on April 2016

Table-4 shows that under Government Anganwadi centre of Madhya Pradesh, there are 44.4 % children receiving pre-school education in rural area and 20.1% in urban area whereas, under the non-government institution 51.7% children are receiving pre-school education in urban area and 18.4% children are receiving pre-school education in rural area. 27.6 % children residing in rural area of Madhya Pradesh are not receiving per-school education in Anganwadi centre. Despite the Anganwadi being functioning in rural area big gap is showing.

The percentage of enrolment in Anganwadi centre of scheduled tribe children is 50.2 percent, scheduled caste is 39.2 percent, other backward class is 35.6 percent and other category is 19.1 percent which reveals that the scheduled tribe performance is very high in Anganwadi centre of Madhya Pradesh. It shows that in both rural and tribal areas children go to the Anganwadi centre for food and play activity.

Table-5: Percentage of children attended Pre-School Education in AWCs for 16 or more days in the month

Attending Pre-School Education	Residence			Social Category			
	Total	Rural	Urban	SC	ST	OBC	OTHER
	37.4	39.7	26	26.7	46.1	34.2	40.2

Source: Rapid Survey on Children as on April, 2016

The data in Table-5 shows that children aged 3 -6 years who attended pre-school education for more than 16 days in rural and tribal area are 39.4 and 26 percentage respectively. In the Anganwadi centre 46.1% of tribal children are receiving pre-school education for more than 16 days which shows commendable effort of the Anganwadi centres. Therefore, children of scheduled tribes participate more in pre-school education. Their trend towards Anganwadi shows the positive impact of early childhood care and education.

Importance of Anganwadi Centre for Growth of Pre-school Education among Tribal Children

Anganwadi centre is the best place for children to learn and provide pre-school education to children ages 3–6 through an enjoyable mode of playful activities. The problem of tribal education and the socio-economic status of the tribe and its effect on their literacy, majority of community representatives who noted the school-going children. Regularity and residence of the teachers are promoting education among children but parents have illiteracy, financial problems, lack of encouragement, poverty, and apathy towards education; seasonal agriculture, and taking care of siblings, are adversely affecting the education of the tribal children (Reddy et al., 2010). For the promotion of literacy of the tribal population, the state government, with the support of the central government, has initiated establishment of Ashram schools. Under Article 275(1) of the constitution, special area programmes of special central assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub Plan and Grant were initiated.

Preschool education is generally considered an essential requirement for primary education, which constitutes one of education's most significant goals. (Singh Bhoodev, 2008) The trend toward Anganwadi shows the positive impact of early education. An evaluation study has found that the utilization rate of ICDS is higher for mothers and children from "vulnerable" groups (SC and ST) compared to those from relatively "privileged" groups (upper-caste Hindus), and it has been suggested that the ICDS program would be a success when mothers from privileged groups participate less and mothers from vulnerable and marginalized groups participate more (Borooah & Vani, 2014).

The National Policy on Education for Children (1974) highlighted that children are the nation's most valuable assets and that the nation is accountable for their childhood development and concern therefore, preschool education started to receive more attention. The strategy also recommended funding for early childhood education and development as well as the creation of a high-level National Children's Board. Early childhood education was also viewed by the New Policy of Education (1986) as an essential element of educating children in first grade on a holistic manner further According to the Plan of Action, (1992) 70% of children between the ages of 0 and 6 should have access to all services by the year 2000.

Report of New education policy (2016) pointed out that 16 crore children in India fall in the age group 0–6 and 7.54 crore children are in the age group of 3 to 6 years. By end of 2015, 3.6 crore children have enrolled in 13.47 lakh Anganwadi centers under 3 to 6 years of age. Hence, data show that most children enroll in AWCs. The Anganwadi centre plays an important role in development of primary education by increasing the enrollment and restricting school drop -outs of tribal children. Due to proper functioning of Anganwadi centres in tribal and rural areas, it is possible to enroll more children at primary school. The enrollment rate in primary school has increased due to more encouragement of tribal children to attend the Anganwadi centre. The National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy (ECCE) was formulated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in India approved by the Cabinet and published in the Gazette by the Government of India on 12.10.2013. The Early Childhood Care and Education program was launched in India to increase the enrollment rate in children's primary education.

Table-6: Enrolment of Tribal Children in Primary School (I-V)

	2010-2011			2016 -2017		
	Boy	Girl	Total	Boy	Girl	Total
Madhya Pradesh	351179	315834	666013	1043916	952854	1996770
India	1928480	1767927	3696407	6762313	6318480	1308793

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2017

Table-6 shows that the total enrolment of tribal children in a primary school in Madhya Pradesh is 1996770 while in India it is 1308793. During 2011 the enrolment of tribal children of Madhya Pradesh at primary school is more than the enrolment of tribal children of India. Therefore, Anganwadi center plays a major role in promoting education among tribal children.

Anganwadi Centre's Role in Reducing School Dropout of Children

Dropout is a serious threat that troubles the primary education system in India. The issue has been studied in India and other developing countries over the past 65 years. School dropouts arise from an accumulation of different risk factors throughout children schooling. There is no single reason why students drop out of primary school. Official figures show that approximately 30 percent of children drop out before completing even five years of schooling and overall, approximately 50 percent children leave schools without completing the 8 years compulsory schooling period. The states of Uttar Pradesh, Meghalaya, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Arunachal Pradesh are amongst the states with the largest percentage of children not attending schools both in 1991 and 2001.

There are some common reasons behind the increased rate of dropout: poverty and poor income, limited to access to credit, child labour, and children and parents lack of interest in education, negative school climate, lack of community support and so. However, structural inequalities remain as a hidden reason behind dropout in rural and tribal communities in India. In tribal communities, poverty, superstition, ignorance, cultural constraints and gender bias that obstruct schooling.

AWCs are important for pre-school activities of children to make them aware about school atmosphere as well as to develop the habit of learning among children. Pre-school education is an informal education for the child and one of the major

functions of Anganwadi is to inspire the children to enroll into primary school. Dropout is a serious threat that is disrupting India's primary education system. Divya K. (2017) concluded from her study "Children out of School: Status of Tribal Children in Madhya Pradesh" that the dropout rate among tribal children is higher among tribal children in the state than the general population.

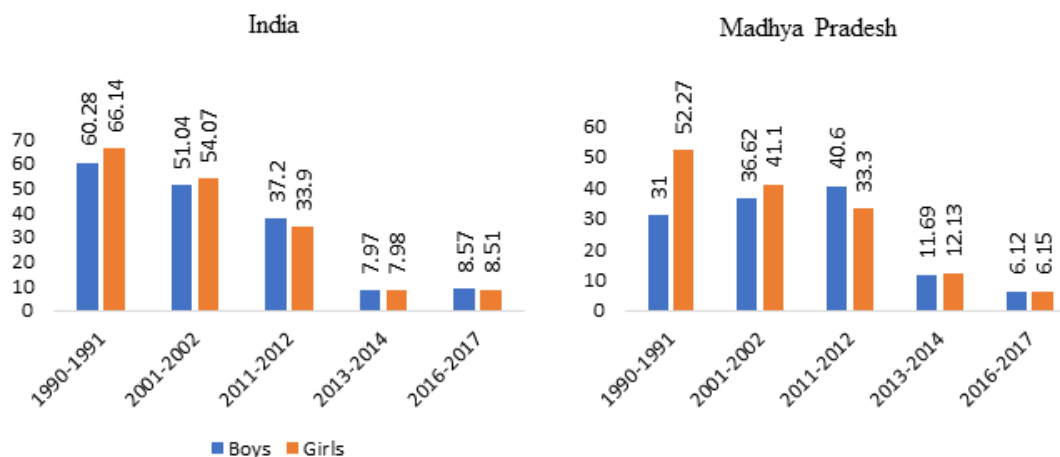
The reason behind the highest dropout rate among tribal children is due to multiple factors like lack of awareness about education; absence of nursery school, the medium of instruction, and poor health condition of children. Study of Sujatha (1994) revealed that the poor health of tribal children is the major hindrance to education. Contagious diseases like scabies, eye infection, malaria, and chickenpox are common in tribal areas which affect children's attendance at school. The report also states that some tribal communities are seasonal migrants, so this trend in absenteeism reflects on the school attendance of their children, thereby standing as a constraint in getting a primary school education.

Table-7: School Dropout Rates of Schedule Tribe Students at Primary School in India and Madhya Pradesh

Year	India			Madhya Pradesh		
	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
1990-1991	60.28	66.14	62.52	31	52.27	38.59
2001-2002	51.04	54.07	52.34	36.62	41.1	38.59
2011-2012	37.2	33.9	35.6	40.6	33.3	37.1
2013-2014	7.97	7.98	7.98	11.69	12.13	11.9
2016-2017	8.57	8.51	8.54	6.12	6.15	6.14

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2017

Figure-1: School Dropout Rates of Tribal Students at Primary School



Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (2017)



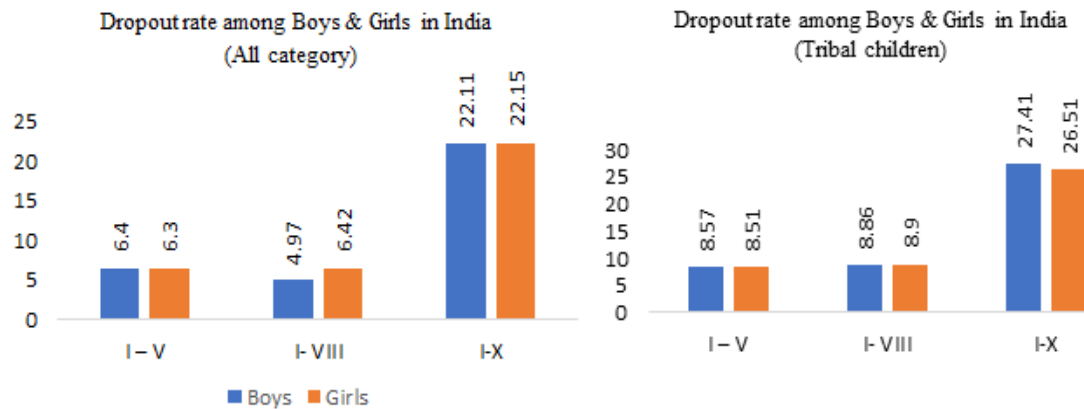
Figure-1 shows that in India, the dropout rate of tribal girl students has decreased from 66.14% to 8.51% between 2011 and 2017. In Madhya Pradesh, the school dropout rate of tribal girls drastically declined from 52.27% to 6.15% between 1991 and 2017. Implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Education program in Madhya Pradesh has declined the school dropout rate in primary school especially for girls among tribal children.

Table-8: Dropout Rate among Boys and Girls in India (2016-2017)

Classes	All children			Tribal children		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
I-V	6.4	6.3	6.35	8.57	8.51	8.54
VI-VIII	4.97	6.42	5.67	8.86	8.9	8.88
IX-X	22.11	22.15	22.13	27.41	26.51	26.97

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (2017)

Figure-2: Dropout Rate among Boys and Girls in India (2016-17)



Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (2017)

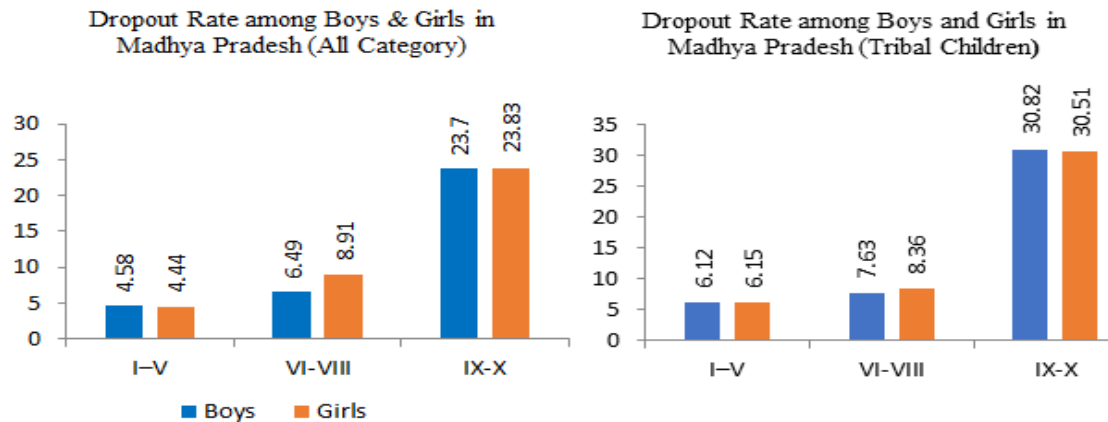
Statistical data in Figure-2 reveals that the dropout rate among tribal girl children in India, in class I-V is 8.51%, in class is VI-VIII is 8.9%, and class IX-X is 26.51%, which means that the dropout rate in all levels of education is higher among tribal girl children in comparison to the all-category girl children in India. The dropout rate shows an increasing trend for both tribal boys and girls from class I-V to class IX-X.

Table-9: Dropout Rate among Boys and Girls in Madhya Pradesh (2016-2017)

Classes	All children			Tribal children		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
I - V	4.58	4.44	4.51	6.12	6.15	6.14
VI- VIII	6.49	8.91	7.65	7.63	8.36	7.98
IX-X	23.7	23.83	23.76	30.82	30.51	30.67

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (2017)

Figure-3: Dropout Rate among Boys and Girls in Madhya Pradesh (2016-17)



Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India (2017)

The dropout rate among tribal girl child in Madhya Pradesh in class I-V is 6.15 %, class VI-VIII is 8.36%, and class IX-X is 30.51%, whereas, in Madhya Pradesh the overall dropout rate for girl children in class I-V is 4.44%, class VI-VIII is 8.91% and class IX-X is 23.83%. It means dropout rate is higher among tribal girl children in class I-V and IX-X. The dropout rate for tribal girls in all stages of education is higher than boys except for class IX-X where it is surprisingly slightly lower compared to boys. Another significant finding of the statistical data is that in case of tribal children the total dropout rate in all classes is higher in comparison to overall children dropout rate in Madhya Pradesh.

In the tribal area parents are unaware of the importance of primary education due to low literacy. The mothers being engaged in wages and other work, are unable to pay attention to their children, therefore, the elder siblings take care of their younger siblings, and they do not attend regular school.

Significance of Anganwadi Centre in Health and Nutrition for Tribal Children

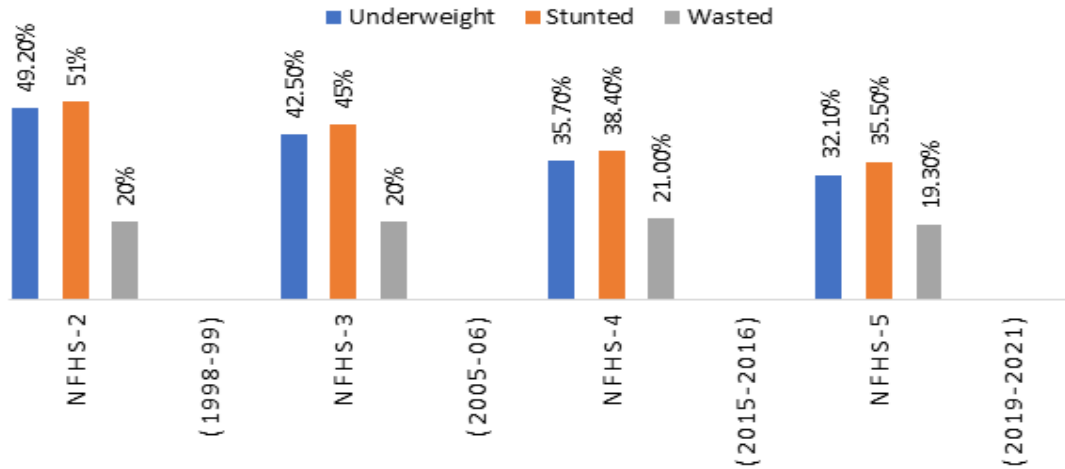
Madhya Pradesh is one of the places, where the largest tribal population resides in India. There are 46 types of tribal groups residing in Madhya Pradesh and three of them Baiga, Bhariya, sahriya have been identified as Vulnerable Primitive Tribal Groups. The major tribes are Gond, Bhil, Korku and Koul (Heralal, 1916). According to the 2011 census, scheduled tribes constitute 21.1% of Madhya Pradesh (15.31 million out of 72.62 million) The literacy rate of tribe population in Madhya Pradesh is 50.55 % while in the male it is 59.5% and for female it is 41.47% (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, 2011). The literacy rate among tribes of Madhya Pradesh is very low as compared to the national level. The educational status of tribal women is very low which has an adverse impact on the literacy rate of their children. However, Anganwadi centre has made tribal women aware of health and education. The Anganwadi centre has reduced the problem of malnutrition in Madhya Pradesh to a great extent. Malnutrition is a serious threat that troubles primary education among tribal children. Most rural and tribal children below six years of age have malnutrition because they have insufficient health facilities. Gupta et.al,2013 mentioned in their article “Integrated child development services: A journey of 37 years” reviewed the functioning and progress of the ICDS scheme of India. ICDS was perceived as a provider of primary health services. National Center



for Excellence (NACER) study in the year 2001, found that nearly 75% of the households reported regular health checkups through Anganwadi centers.

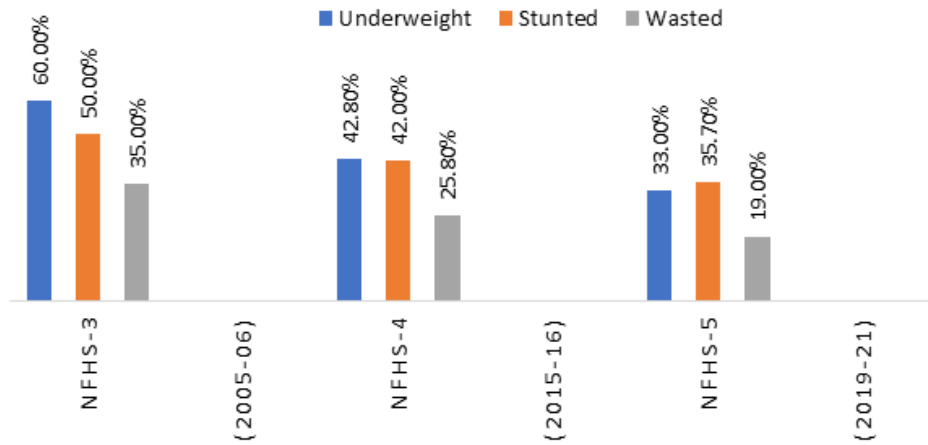
K. Sujatha (1994 revealed) in her report Education among Scheduled Tribes that poor health of tribal children is a major hindrance to primary education. Contagious diseases like flu, eye infection, scabies, and malaria are common in tribal regions which affect children's attendance at school and reports also state that some tribal communities are seasonal migrants, so this trends to absenteeism shows among their children. Therefore, they do not get a proper education from school.

Figure-4: Trends of Malnutrition among Children below Five Years in India



Source: National Family Health Survey-5 (2021)

Figure-5: Trends of Malnutrition among Children below Five Years in Madhya Pradesh



Source: National Family Health Survey-5 (2021)

As per statistics in Figure-4 the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021), 32.1 percent of children under the age of five are underweight, 35.5 percent are stunted and 19 percent are wasted in India. As per National Family Health Survey data, the national average of children below five years who are underweight has got reduced from 49.2% to 32.1% between 1998 and 2021.

In Madhya Pradesh, 33 percent of children below five years are underweight. The prevalence of stunting and wasting in Madhya Pradesh is 35.7 percent and 19.0 percent respectively. In Madhya Pradesh, the prevalence of underweight children below five years has gone down from 60.0 percent (NFHS-3) to 33 percent (NFHS-5). It may be attributed to the significant focus by Anganwadi centres in health and nutrition of the tribal children in Madhya Pradesh.

IV. CONCLUSION

Health and education are fundamental rights of children. Education and health status of tribal children in Madhya Pradesh is worse than the national level for which inclusive growth is not possible without formal education of Indian tribes. Statistical analysis of data from various Government sources like National Institute of Public Cooperation (NIPCCD), Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and Ministry of Women and Child Development Department proved that in Madhya Pradesh enrolment of tribal children is highest in Anganwadi centres. Therefore, it may be concluded that health and early childhood education can be improved through proper functioning of Anganwadi centres, so that enrolment in primary school is more as a result of school attendance and dropout rate can be reduced. Non-formal education of children in Anganwadi centre has a positive impact on health and pre-school education. Development of primary education of children is the major responsibility of both the central and state government, therefore, to pay special attention in the form of allocation of educational funds for infrastructural development and other logistic support to the Anganwadi centre is one of the very important criteria for tribal education. Keeping in mind the early childhood care and education of children under the ICDS, the Government of India is providing funds for the development of the Anganwadi centre; hence, there is a need to improve the operation of the Anganwadi centre and encourage children to avail preschool education.

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