



HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG SCHEDULED TRIBES IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: ASPIRATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

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ABSTRACT

Higher education plays a constructive role in the socio economic upliftment of the society. This higher education fulfils its role when it is well equipped with necessary infrastructure and modern facilities. The paper discusses the tribes of Himachal Pradesh in its introductory part. Aspirations of the students in tribal colleges from higher education and the challenges involved while pursuing higher education has been discussed in the paper. Geographical, financial and academic constraints faced by the students in the tribal areas have been studied.

KEYWORDS: Higher Education, Scheduled tribe.

INTRODUCTION:

Education beyond the secondary level refers to higher education. It is often assumed that higher learning institutions are the ones that offer, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees or Ph.D. degrees or equivalents. Higher educational institutions include a wide variety of universities, vocational and technical college's professional schools as in the field of law, theology, medicine, business, music and art. Other institutions like teachers training school and technological institutions in higher education are also included in higher education. Moreover, institutions for training highly skilled specialists in the field of economics, science, technology and culture are also treated as higher educational institutions as these institutions allow candidates to pursue specialized education on the completion of their secondary education.

Higher education provides a cutting edge to shape the future of that child. Thus, the higher education contributes to the economic development and social progress in a country. It stimulates the economic growth, which generates social opportunities for the masses. As education creates a knowledge based society, therefore, it is regarded as an effective instrument of positive social mobility. It is a key to both personal and societal development. For individuals, education beyond the secondary level is assumed to be the way to social esteem, better paying jobs, expanded life options, intellectual stimulation and frequently a good time in the pursuit of any or all of the above. For societies, higher education is assumed to be the key of technology, productivity and other ingredients of international competitiveness and economic growth. It is believed to be a major engine of social justice, equal opportunity and democracy.

SCHEDULED TRIBES

The term tribe applied to the people who are considered to be primitive, living in back ward areas, speaking common language, observing uniform rules of social organization and working together for common purposes. They have characteristics of common name, a contiguous territory, a relatively uniform culture or way of life and a tradition of common descent. People from Scheduled Tribes (STs) - otherwise known as adivasis or tribal groups - are socially excluded in India, facing discrimination on the basis of their

ethnicity. As a result, adivasis find themselves excluded from many aspects of day-to-day life including health services, economies and educational establishments. STs make up 8.6% of India's population (Census, 2011).

Scheduled Tribes in Himachal Pradesh has been sparsely distributed which makes it challenging task for the policy makers to make education accessible to all without any distinction. The Scheduled Tribe population of the Pradesh has its concentration in districts of Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti, Pangi and Bharmour parts of Chamba and scattered in other district. Tribal population stands out to be 3,92,126 according to 2011 Census. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India has notified Gaddis and Gujjers residing in merged areas of the State as Scheduled Tribes. Tribes in Himachal Pradesh constitute 5.71 percent of the total population of the state while holding the geographical area of 42.49 percent of the total geographical area of the state.

A sample of 200 tribal students from four colleges of Himachal Pradesh namely Government Degree College Kinnaur, Kukumseri Lahaul Spiti, Bharmour and Pangi Chamba were taken. Purposive sampling was done with an objective to have an overview (aspiration and challenges) of higher education in the tribal districts of Himachal Pradesh. A questionnaire was presented to the respondents to get the status of higher education in their respective colleges.

Roy (2007) analyzed Indian higher education in the era of globalization and pointed out that most of the higher education institutions in our country lacked even the basic library and laboratory facilities. Old syllabi, unscientific evaluation system, malpractices of different sorts, even in teacher's appointment, poor salaries of the teaching staff, low level of infrastructure facilities, are some of the burning problems of the present higher education system. The university system has certain limitations such as; it is still dominated by traditional set up of rules, regulations and statutes that offer little scope for quick improvement in its present work-system and the required level of autonomy and flexibility; universities with their static, rigid and bureaucratic style of functioning, seem to have little integral urge to accept a change and dynamic mechanism that susceptible to changes; the level and quality of innovation and research do not come up to expected social and educational relevance; our universities are often reduced to the level of more examination conducting bodies; the absence of needed innovation and lack of willingness to overcome rigidity, have crippled the growth of the Indian higher education system. **Mondal and Mete (2012)** attempted to focus mainly on the overall tribal development in India. The study revealed that the central and state governments have taken various schemes and programmes such as scheme for Primitive Tribal Groups, strengthening of education, coaching, post matric scholarship, hostels for girls and boys, ashram schools, vocational training in tribal areas for overall development of education of the tribals. In spite of these programmes the problem of geographical isolation from the mainstream population continues as they are living in the remote areas. Their physical and social isolation contribute to other problems. The tribal culture is entirely different to those of the majority. The cultural gap is the main hindrance in the assimilation and integration of tribal. Superstitious belief, child marriage, homicide and animal sacrifice etc. are some harmful practices are evidence of their backwardness. The economy is agriculture based. Besides schemes and programmes undertaken by government, other steps such as motivation of parents and teachers may be taken for their overall development.

ASPIRATIONS FROM HIGHER EDUCATION

Like others, tribal students have aspirations and expectations from themselves as well as from their education and therefore, the sample respondents were asked questions so as to mark out their aspirations from higher education and the challenges they face while getting higher education. Information was sought regarding perception of students to have higher education. The responses are shown in the table 1

Table no 1
Frequencies and percentages of the responses of students regarding reasons for getting higher education

S.No.	Reasons for getting Higher Education	Students response			
		Yes	Percentage	N0	Percentage
1	Knowledge enhancement	165	82.50	35	17.50
2	Parents expectation	70	35.00	130	65.00
3	Social pressure	40	12.50	160	87.50
4	Raising living standards	156	86.50	44	13.75
5	Interest in studies	173	87.50	25	12.50
6	To become independent	156	78.00	44	22.00
7	To get social status	160	80.00	40	20.00
8	Better employment	145	72.50	55	27.50

Source: Filed Work

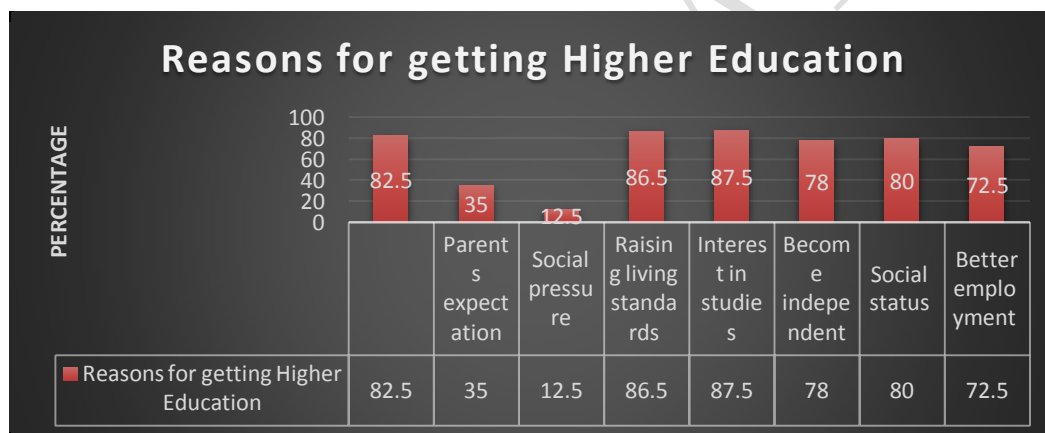


Figure 1

Table no. 1 represents reasons, expectations, and aspirations of students for getting higher education. 82.5 percent respondents pursue higher education for their knowledge enhancement while 17.5 went negative on the statement.

It is clear from the table above that 35 percent of the respondents have their parent’s expectation attached to higher education which marks an idea that parents wish their wards to have higher education. It can be inferred from the marked response that there is definitely a family pressure which pushes the students to pursue higher studies.

It is evident in the table above that 12 percent of the respondents have been pursuing higher education under social pressure. 86.5 percent of the respondents believe that higher education helps in raising the standard of living. It can be seen that social pressure has a negligible but still an important role in promoting higher education among tribes in the state. Besides this strong vote in the favor higher education improving the standard of living shows that higher education provides the youth with all those employment opportunities that help in raising their standard of living.

The interest in studies is evident from 87.5 percent respondents marking positive. It shows their interest in higher studies.

In order to achieve a high social status in society one has to pursue higher education. From the data in the figure 1 it is seen that 80 percent respondents marked positive on the above statement. This fact is one of the major driving force which induces the students to pursue higher education

It is seen in the table no.1 that better employment as a preference of 72.5 percent respondents show that higher education has an upper hand in getting good job.

It is clear from the table that there is a relationship between higher education and better social status in the society i.e. the positive relationship between higher education and upliftment of the social and economic status.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONSTRAINT

A peculiar feature about the tribes in Himachal Pradesh is their sparsely distributed population. With such distribution of population it becomes a challenging task for the education policy makers and the Government to locate the educational institution in such a way that it is equally accessible for one and all.

Reasons for selection of a particular college

With an aim of education at doorsteps following questions were projected towards the respondents for which the investigator got responses in positive and negative.

Table no. 2
Frequencies and percentages of the responses of students regarding reasons for the selection of a particular college

S.No.	Reasons for the selection of a particular college	Students response			
		Yes	Percentage	NO	Percentage
1	A provision of good quality of education in the college	150	75.00	50	25.00
2	Admission of friends in same college	54	33.00	106	66.00
3	Parent’s suggestion	72	36.00	128	64.00
4	Location of college at appropriate distance	124	62.00	76	38.00
5	Only a single college in the vicinity	192	96.00	12	04.00

Source: Filed Work

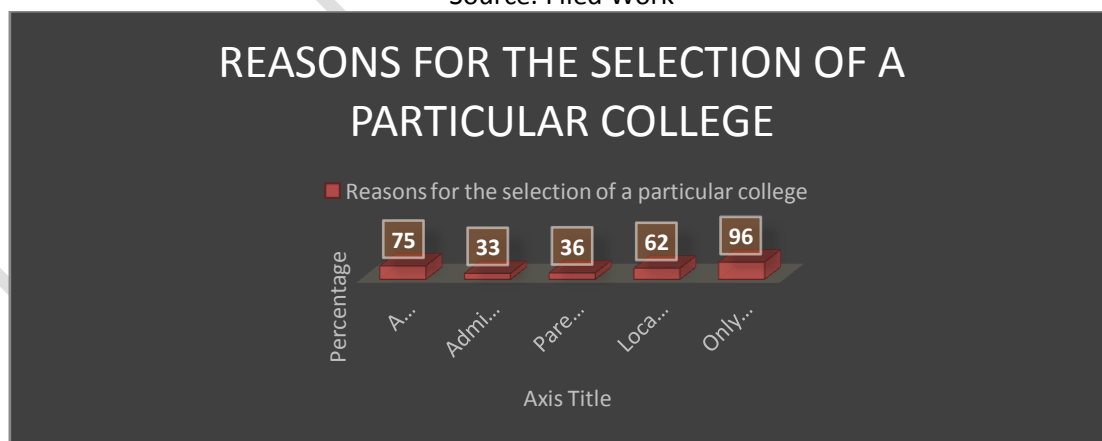


Figure 2

Table no 2 reveals the opinions of the students on their choice of college for higher studies. In response to the question on reason for their selecting the college, 75 percent respondents chose the college as they believe quality of education is imparted in college.

Data in the table shows that 33 and 36 percent of the students took admission in the particular college as their friends got admission in same college and on their parent’s suggestion respectively.

As is evident in the figure 2 location of the college near their home has been the reason of 62 percent of the students in the selection of the particular college.

From the table it was found that 96 percent of the respondents chose the college because it is the only college in their district. Having no other college for higher education the tribal students are forced willingly and unwillingly depending upon their socio economic status to choose the only college in their district.

Mode of Transportation

Table no 3

Frequencies and percentages of the responses of students about mode of transportation

S.No.	Mode of transportation	Students response	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	On foot	119	59.5
2.	Bus	76	38
3.	Private taxi	5	02.5
4.	Own vehicle	--	

Source: Filed Work

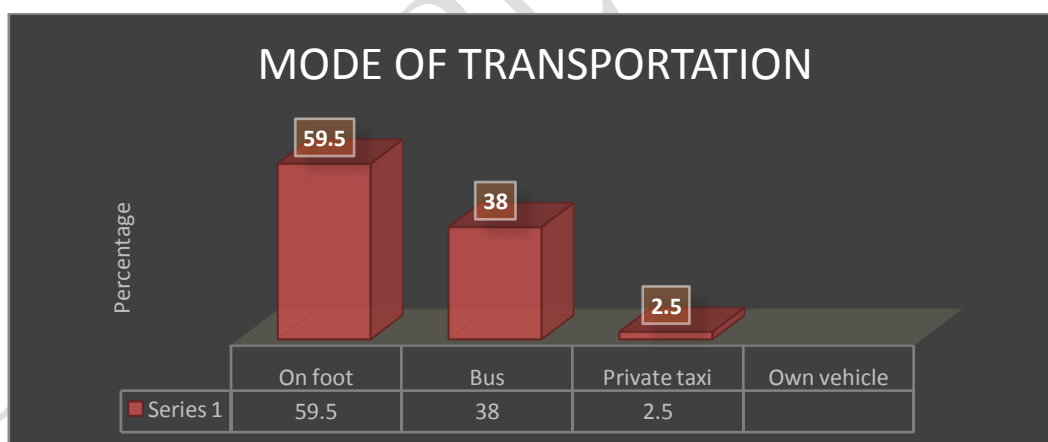


Figure 3

It is clear from the table No. 3 above that 59.5,38 and 2.5 percent of the students come to the college on foot, by bus and private taxi’s respectively.

It can be observed from the above data that majority of the students come to the college on foot followed by bus. Mere 2.5 have to take taxis as a mode of transport to reach the institute. None of them own their own vehicle. Mode of transportation is a challenge in these tribal areas.

Distance of college from the residence of the students

Table 4 shows the distance of respondent’s place of residence to the college.

Table No 4
Frequencies and percentages of the responses of the students about accessibility to college

S. No.	Coming to the college daily from a distance	Students response	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	1-5 km	60	30.0
2.	6-10 km	26	13.0
3.	11-15 km	28	14.0
4.	16-20km	16	08.0
5.	20 km above	70	35.0

Source: Filed Work



Figure 4

Table no. 4 shows the distance of the college from the place of residence of the respondents. It is seen that 30 percent of the students come to the college form a distance of 1-5 kilometres.

From the figure 4 above it is clear that 13 percent of the respondents come from a distance of 6-10 kilometers, while 14 percent of them come from a distance of 11-15 kilometers.

It is clear from table no. 5 that mere 8 percent respondents come from a distance of 16-20 kilometers.

Data from the table above depicts that 35 percent tribal respondents travel a distance of 20 kilometers to reach college.

From this it can be conclude that accessibility is a challenge for the students in tribal areas.

Reasons for selection of subjects of studies

Tribal students were asked for reasons for selection of subjects of studies. The responses are tabulated in the table No.5

Table No. 5
Frequencies and percentages of the responses of students regarding reasons for selection of subjects of studies

S.No.	Reasons for selection of subjects of studies	Students response			
		Yes	Percentage	NO	Percentage
1	Limited choice of subjects in college	180	90.00	20	10.00
2	Friends have same subjects combination	47	23.50	153	75.50
3	Parents suggestions	36	22.50	124	77.50
4	Same subjects at secondary (+2) level	146	73.00	54	27.00

Source: Filed Work

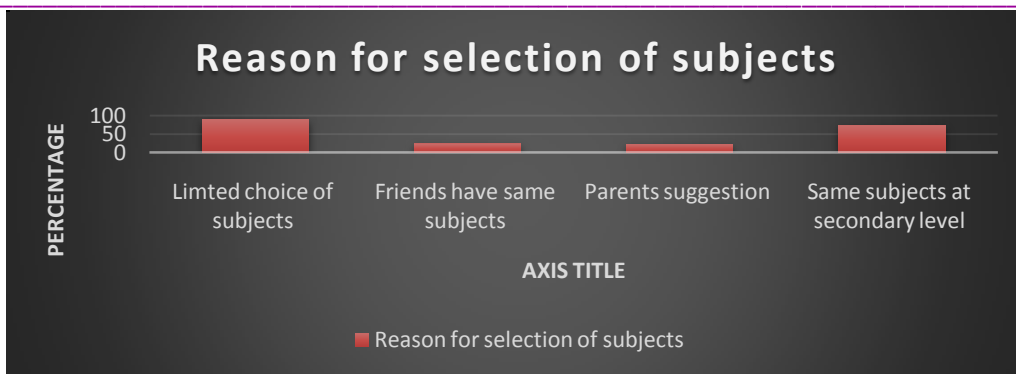


Figure 5

Table no. 5 reveals that 23.5 percent students had same combination of subjects as their friends.

It is clear from the table no. 5 that 90 percent respondents marked that there is limited choice of subjects in the college. This limitation in terms of choice of subjects induces in the death of interest of the students thereby limiting their performance in other subject.

It is clear from the figure 5 above that 22.5 and 23.5 percent respondents chose the subjects because their friends had same subject and on their parent’s suggestions respectively. Both the options lead us to infer that it is the lack of confidence and vision among students.

From the table no. 5 it can be seen that 73 percent agreed on the fact that they had same subjects at secondary (+2) level but 27 percent tribal students changed their combination of subjects that they had at secondary level.

An important fact that comes out from the table that it is the limited choice of the subject which has led the students in tribal colleges to unwillingly study the present subjects. This important factor that has led the students to compromise with their interest in particular subjects.

FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

The analysis and interpretation of the responses of the tribal students about different demographic characteristics is given as under:

Table No. 6

Frequencies and percentages of the responses of the students about Financial support in their studies

S.No.	Financial support received	Students response			
		Yes	Percentage	NO	Percentage
1	Scholarship	138	69.00	05	02.50
2	Parents	188	94.00	12	06.00
3	Elder Siblings	042	21.00	158	79.00
4	Relatives	-		-	

Source: Field Work

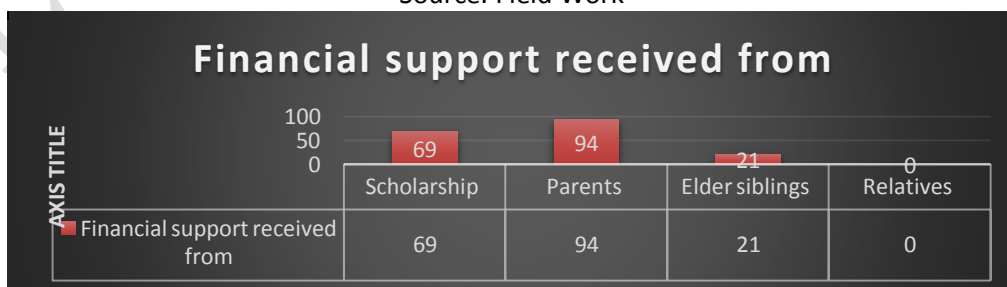


Figure 6

Table No. 6 shows financial assistance to the respondents from different sources while pursuing higher education.

Data in the table no. 6 above shows that 94 percent respondents are financially dependent upon their parents for getting higher education. Since the area is an agricultural driven economy the dependency on the parents is connected to the climatic conditions.

It is evident from the table above that 21 percent respondents marked affirmative on the financial assistance they get from their elder siblings whereas 79 percent of them marked negative on the same question.

It is seen from the table no 6 that 69 percent of the respondents receive scholarship as a financial assistance. It is clear in the table that 2.5 marked negative on the same question posed to them. It can be seen that majority of the students are getting scholarships as a source of financial assistance while pursuing higher education. The fact leads us to infer that financial assistance from the Government is reaching the target students.

The above table shows that dependency for higher education follows a sequence of parents, scholarship and elder siblings respectively.

Stay during studies

Information was sought regarding the place of residence of the students, where respondents travel to get higher education in the respective colleges.

Table no. 7
Frequencies and percentages of the Responses of students regarding place of residence

S.No.	Stay during studies	Students response	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Home	115	57.5
2.	Relatives home	25	12.5
3.	Rented house	43	21.5
4.	Hostel	17	08.5

Source: Filed Work

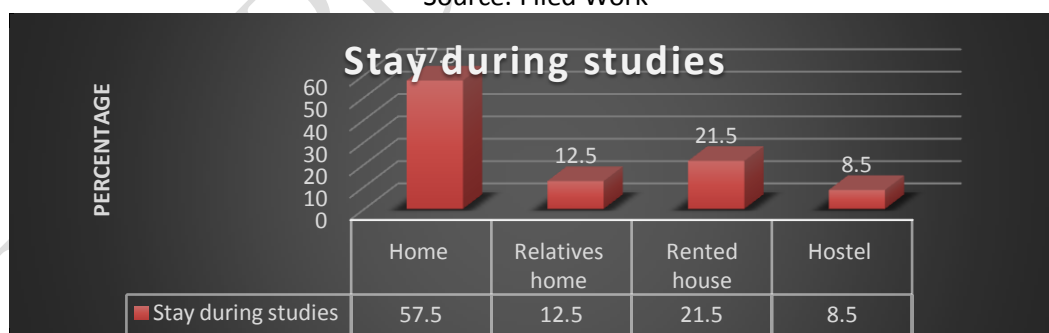


Figure 7

Table no.7 indicates that 57.5, 21.5, 12.5 and 8.5 percent of the tribal students come to the college from home, rented accommodation, relative’s home and hostel’s respectively.

It can be seen that majority of the students come to the college from their home followed by the rented accommodation which shows that the challenge of distant home is negotiated through the rented accommodation by the students. Many of them have to stay at their relatives houses who cannot negotiate in the form of rented accommodation. A fair strength of 8.5 percent students stay in hostels.

Academic constraints

Educational resources and facilities

Students were asked about availability of educational resources and Facilities in college. The responses of the students are given below in table 8

Table no. 8
Frequencies and percentages of the responses of students regarding educational resources and facilities in college

S.No.	Items	Students response			
		Yes	Percentage	NO	Percentage
1	College’s own building	127	63.50	70	35.00
2	Adequate number of classrooms	106	53.00	94	47.00
3	Desks /benches sufficient in number	117	58.50	80	40.00
4	Auditorium	-	-	200	100
5	Laboratories	50	25.00	135	67.50
6	Canteen facility	3	1.50	197	98.50
7	Clean drinking water	170	85.00	30	15.00
8	Regular supply of electricity	159	79.50	36	18.00
-9	Heating facility	26	13.00	167	83.50
10	Playground	105	52.50	95	47.50
11	Provision of adequate sports material	180	90.00	20	10.00
12	Physical education teacher	155	77.50	45	22.50
13	Hostel facility for boys	-	-	197	98.50
14	Hostel facility for girls	50	25.00	147	73.50
15	Computer lab	100	50.00	90	45.00
16	Computers lab equipped with sufficient number of computers	23	21.70	83	78.30
17	Internet facility is available for students	47	44.34	56	52.83

Source: Filed Work

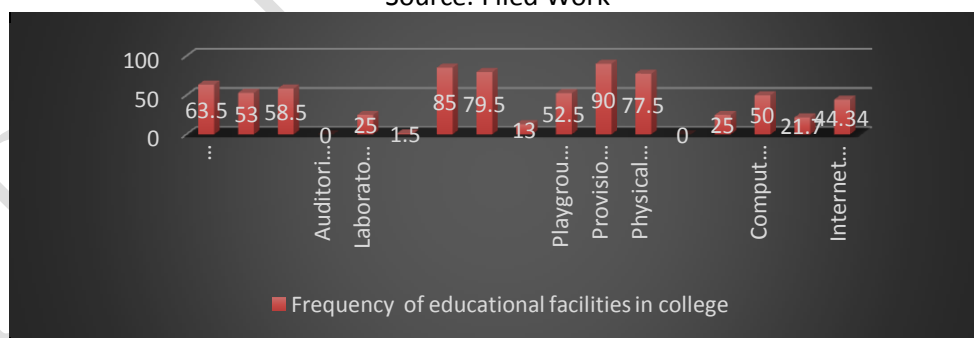


Figure 8

It is evident from the table no. 8 that 63.5 percent of the students marked positive on the statement that the college has its own building while 35 percent responded in negative, which shows that basic infrastructure is not available in some colleges.

Note: It was noted that colleges in Bharmour and Pangri did not had their own building.

In response to question whether adequate number of classrooms available in their colleges, 53 percent respondents marked 'yes' while remaining 47 percent marked 'No'.

Data in the table shows that where 58.5 percent stated that sufficient number of benches/ desks is available in the classrooms 40 percent respondents marked it negative.

The data in the table shows that none of the colleges of higher education has an auditorium.

It is evident from the table that 25 percent admitted that there are laboratories for concerned subjects in their college.

Note: It is to be noted that college in Kinnaur district have science subjects.

98.5 percent negative voting as seen in the table above for the presence of canteen shows that there is no canteen facility in the college.

It is seen from the table above that 85 and 79.5 percent respondents agreed on availability of clean drinking water regular supply of electricity in the college.

Regarding the availability of heating facilities, 83.5 percent respondent revealed that there is no heating facility in classrooms for winters. This makes it challenging for them in winters.

With only 52.5 percent of the respondents marking positive on the availability of the playground it can be inferred that not all the colleges have a playground for outdoor activities.

On having a look at the table above it is clear that 77.5 percent students reported presence of Physical Education teacher marks that the students have a teacher to guide in sports and other associated outdoor activities 90 percent students marking the presence of sports material in the table above shows that colleges have adequate sports goods or items in the college.

98.5 percent respondents reported that a hostel facility for boy students is unavailable. Only 25 percent respondents agreed on the availability of hostel for girls in their respective colleges.

Note: while going through the field work it was seen that Degree College Kinnaur is having a higher learning institute which the facility of hostel for girls. Boys as well as girls hostel being present in Degree College Lahaul in non-working condition marks the wastage of infrastructural resource. Girls' hostel is present in Degree College Kinnaur.

The table shows that 50 percent respondents marked that colleges have computer labs.

Note: Degree College Kinnaur and Bharmour are the colleges equipped with computer labs.

Sufficient number of computer is marked by only 21.7 percent of the respondents whereas the data in the table above revealed that 78.30 percent respondent do not find computer lab equipped with sufficient number of computers in college.

While taking a note of internet availability, it was seen that 44.34 percent of the respondents marked positive and 52.83 percent denied the availability of internet in college campus.

Library facilities

Students were asked about the availability of library facilities. The responses of the students are tabulated in Table no. 9

Table no. 9

Frequencies and percentages of the responses of students regarding facilities in Library

S.No.	Items	Students response			
		Yes	Percentage	NO	Percentage
1	Adequate reading space	167	88.50	23	11.50
2	Adequate furniture	135	67.50	65	32.50
3	Subject wise number of books	127	68.50	60	30.00
4	Magazines	125	62.50	68	34.00
5	Newspapers	73	36.50	120	60.00
6	Latest journals	83	41.50	107	53.50

7	Online access to e-books	-	0	197	98.50
8	Wi-Fi facility	-	0	147	73.50

Source: Filed Work

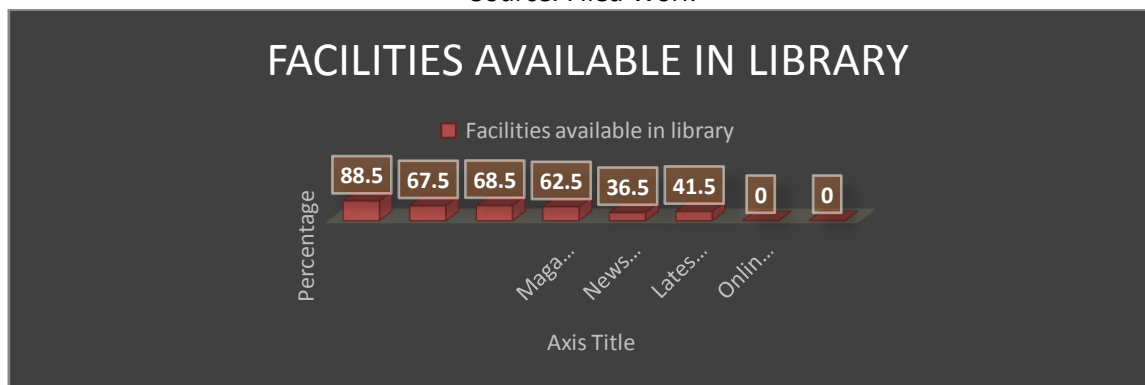


Figure 9

It is clear from the data in table no.9 that libraries have an adequate reading space with marking positivity of 88.5 percent, adequate furniture with 67.5 percent subject wise books with 68.5 percent and magazines with 62.5 percent. The institutes lack in terms of newspapers with mere 36.5 marking positive, journals with 41.5 percent, online access to e books and wifi facility with zero mark.

FINDINGS

Some of the findings of the study are listed below:

1. Tribal students aspire for better socio economic status through higher education besides knowledge enhancement.
2. Only college as well as limited choice of subjects in those college is a matter of concern that needs an address.
3. Fair strength of students are benefitted from the scholarships provided by the Government.
4. Basic infrastructure with adequate number of furniture is the requirement of the colleges.
5. Libraries are lacking newspapers, magazines, online access to e-books and wi-fi facility in these colleges.

CONCLUSION

Higher education plays an important role in upliftment of socio economic status of an individual. With a constitutional aim of social inclusion it becomes important to take all together in the developmental process. The colleges in the tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh lack in terms of basic infrastructure, modern library facilities, and limited choice of colleges as well as subjects. Since the cost of infrastructure would be high in such areas the government as well as the policy makers must focus on the quality infrastructure, location of the college so that it is equally accessible to the common students. Vocational training institutes as well as counseling must be provided to the students to prepare them for the professional life so that they could achieve their aspiration of better social and economic status by overcoming impediments in terms of geographical, financial and academic constraint.

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