



SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AMONG JHARKHAND TRIBES

Ranjeet Kumar¹, Dr. Anand Kumar²

¹Research Scholar, P.G. Dept. of Psychology, M.U. Bodh-Gaya, Gaya, Bihar, India

²Sr. Assistant Professor, P.G. Center of Psychology, Gaya College, Gaya, Bihar, India

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Received: 01.06.25

Accepted: 09.06.25

Published: 30/06/25

Keywords: Tribal communities;
Socio-economic development;
Attitudes; Mental health; Cultural
identity

ABSTRACT

Tribal communities in Jharkhand, such as the Santhal, Munda, and Oraon, remain among the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups in India despite their rich cultural heritage. Socio-economic development in these regions has introduced both opportunities for education, income diversification, and modern employment, as well as challenges related to cultural dislocation, psychological stress, and shifting attitudes. This study examines the relationship between socio-economic transformation, attitudes, and mental health among 80 respondents from Ranchi, Gumla, and Simdega districts. A cross-sectional descriptive design was adopted, and data were collected through structured household surveys and interviews using standardized tools including the Socio-Economic Status Scale, the Mental Health Inventory, and a self-constructed Attitude Scale. The findings reveal that over half of the respondents valued education and accepted modern occupations, while 70% expressed strong attachment to cultural traditions. Mental health analysis showed high prevalence of stress and anxiety, particularly among unemployed youth and economically insecure households, with women reporting higher anxiety levels than men. Statistical results indicated that socio-economic status significantly correlated with mental health ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) and explained 36% of variance in psychological outcomes. The study concludes that socio-economic development is a key determinant of both attitudes and mental wellbeing, underscoring the need for integrated, culturally sensitive development policies in Jharkhand's tribal regions.



1. 1. Introduction

Jharkhand, carved out as a separate state in 2000, is characterized by its high tribal population, including Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Ho, Kharia and several other communities. These groups preserve a distinct cultural identity expressed through language, customs, and traditional livelihood systems. Yet, despite their cultural richness, tribal societies in Jharkhand have historically remained on the margins of India's socio-economic progress. Indicators such as poverty levels, educational attainment, employment opportunities, and access to healthcare reflect a persistent developmental lag compared to mainstream populations.

In recent decades, accelerated industrialization, infrastructure development, government welfare programs, and the gradual spread of formal education have begun to alter the socio-economic landscape of tribal regions. This transformation, however, is multidimensional. On one hand, it provides opportunities for upward mobility, modern employment, and exposure to new social institutions. On the other, it introduces challenges in the form of cultural dislocation, identity conflicts, economic insecurity, and psychological stress. Development for indigenous populations, therefore, cannot be understood solely in material terms but must be examined in relation to its impact on mental health and attitudinal change.

Mental health has emerged as a vital but often neglected dimension of tribal wellbeing. With the shift from traditional livelihoods to wage labor, migration, and urban exposure, issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse are increasingly reported. Simultaneously, attitudes toward education, gender relations, occupational choices, and social mobility are undergoing visible shifts, particularly among younger generations. These changes indicate that socio-economic development not only influences material living conditions but also reshapes psychological wellbeing and social behavior.

Although numerous studies in India have addressed tribal poverty, displacement, and welfare policies, very few have examined the intersection of socio-economic development with mental health and attitude in an integrated framework. In the context of Jharkhand, this gap is particularly significant, as the state represents one of the largest tribal concentrations in the country, undergoing rapid social and economic transformation. Without addressing the



psychological consequences of development, policy interventions risk remaining incomplete and ineffective.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the effects of socio-economic development on the attitudes and mental health of tribal communities in Jharkhand. It seeks to assess the extent to which economic progress correlates with psychological wellbeing, identify attitudinal shifts linked to modernization, and highlight the challenges tribals face in reconciling traditional identities with contemporary socio-economic realities. By focusing on this nexus, the article contributes to a more holistic understanding of development that integrates both material and psychological dimensions.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Socio-Economic Development and Tribal Communities in India

India is home to more than 700 tribal groups, officially categorized as *Scheduled Tribes*, who constitute about 8.6% of the national population. These groups inhabit diverse ecological regions and have historically depended on subsistence farming, forest-based activities, and artisanal practices. Several studies have noted that tribal communities are among the most economically disadvantaged populations in India, with persistent issues of poverty, malnutrition, and lack of access to formal education (Xaxa, 2014; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2020). The process of socio-economic development in tribal regions has been shaped by multiple factors—state welfare schemes, industrial projects, natural resource extraction, and infrastructure expansion. Scholars have argued that while such interventions create employment and connectivity, they often disrupt traditional livelihoods and displace communities (Rao, 2016). This dual nature of development—opportunity on one side and marginalization on the other—forms the backdrop against which tribal attitudes and psychological outcomes must be studied.

2.2 Theoretical Linkages between Socio-Economic Status and Psychological Wellbeing

The relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and mental health has been widely explored in social psychology, sociology, and public health literature. According to social



causation theory, low socio-economic status exposes individuals to stressors such as unemployment, inadequate housing, and poor healthcare, which in turn increase vulnerability to mental illness (Dohrenwend, 2000). Conversely, social selection theory suggests that individuals with better psychological wellbeing are more capable of achieving higher socio-economic mobility. Amartya Sen's *Capability Approach* also emphasizes that development must expand individuals' substantive freedoms, including the freedom to live with dignity and mental wellbeing (Sen, 1999). Applying these frameworks to tribal populations highlights that material deprivation and limited capabilities are deeply intertwined with mental health outcomes. In tribal societies where collective identity and cultural practices play central roles, socio-economic change directly influences not only individual wellbeing but also collective psychological resilience.

2.3 Empirical Studies on Tribal Attitudes and Mental Health

Empirical evidence from different tribal belts in India demonstrates that modernization and socio-economic change significantly affect tribal attitudes. Studies in Odisha and Chhattisgarh have shown that education and income levels positively influence attitudes toward women's empowerment, occupational diversity, and acceptance of modern institutions (Mishra, 2018). At the same time, rapid development projects, including mining and industrialization, have been linked to stress, displacement anxiety, and increased substance dependence among tribal men (Patnaik, 2017). Research on tribal youth indicates growing aspirations for formal education and salaried employment, but also rising psychological pressures due to unemployment and cultural dissonance (Toppo, 2019). Mental health surveys among tribal women reveal vulnerabilities to depression and anxiety, often linked to economic insecurity and gender-based discrimination. These findings collectively suggest that socio-economic development reshapes tribal attitudes and influences mental health in complex, sometimes contradictory ways.

2.4 Research Gaps in the Context of Jharkhand

While there is a substantial body of literature on tribal welfare in India, the specific intersection of socio-economic development, attitude, and mental health in Jharkhand remains underexplored. Most studies on Jharkhand tribals have focused on poverty alleviation,



displacement due to mining, or evaluation of government schemes (Kujur, 2015). Mental health aspects are often treated as secondary concerns, with very few integrated assessments of how economic changes alter psychological wellbeing and attitudinal patterns. Furthermore, most available data are fragmented, localized, or based on small samples, making it difficult to generalize findings. There is limited research examining gender-specific mental health outcomes, intergenerational attitudinal shifts, or the role of cultural identity in moderating the effects of development. This gap underscores the need for comprehensive studies that adopt an interdisciplinary approach, linking socio-economic indicators with psychological and attitudinal dimensions in Jharkhand's tribal context.

3. Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional descriptive design to explore the impact of socio-economic development on the attitudes and mental health of tribal communities in Jharkhand. The fieldwork was carried out in selected tribal-dominated districts, namely Ranchi, Gumla, and Simdega, which reflect diverse cultural settings and varying levels of development. A total of 80 respondents were chosen using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure balanced representation across gender, age groups, education, and occupational categories. Primary data were collected through structured interviews and household surveys, facilitated by trained field investigators familiar with tribal dialects to ensure clarity and trust, while informed consent and confidentiality were maintained. To assess different dimensions, standardized instruments were used, including the Socio-Economic Status Scale (Kalia & Sahu, adapted for tribal populations), the Mental Health Inventory (Jagdish & Srivastava), and a self-constructed Attitude Scale that was pre-tested for reliability and validity. The instruments were translated into local tribal languages for better comprehension, and reliability analysis confirmed satisfactory consistency (Cronbach's alpha above 0.75). Secondary data from government reports, census records, and published studies were also utilized for contextual support. Data were processed and analyzed using SPSS (Version 26.0), where descriptive statistics outlined the socio-economic background of respondents, and inferential techniques such as chi-square tests, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis were applied to examine associations between socio-economic variables, attitudes, and mental health outcomes.

4. Results and Discussion



4.1 Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Categories	Frequency (n=80)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	40	50.0
	Female	40	50.0
Age Groups	18–30 years	28	35.0
	31–50 years	34	42.5
	51 years and above	18	22.5
Education	Illiterate	18	22.5
	Primary	26	32.5
	Secondary	22	27.5
	Higher Secondary & above	14	17.5
Occupation	Agriculture	28	35.0
	Wage Labour	24	30.0
	Salaried Employment	16	20.0
	Small Business/Self-Employed	12	15.0
Monthly Income	< 5,000	30	37.5
	5,000 – 10,000	28	35.0
	10,000 – 15,000	14	17.5
	> 15,000	8	10.0

Source: Author's work

The socio-economic data reflect structural inequalities prevalent in Jharkhand's tribal society. Half of the respondents were women, ensuring gender balance in the sample. Age distribution indicates that the majority of participants belonged to the economically active age groups (18–50 years), which is important in analyzing both livelihood patterns and psychological conditions. Educational attainment shows that 55% of respondents had studied only up to primary or secondary levels, and 22.5% were completely illiterate. This educational gap contributes directly to limited employment opportunities. Occupation patterns further demonstrate dependence on low-income activities: 35% of households relied primarily on agriculture, often subsistence-based, while 30% engaged in wage labor under uncertain conditions. Only 20% had access to salaried jobs, reflecting limited entry into formal employment, and 15% were engaged in petty businesses such as local shops or handicrafts. More than two-thirds earned less than ₹10,000 per month, keeping families vulnerable to poverty and debt. Housing conditions (from field observations) revealed that a large number of families still lived in semi-pucca or mud houses with limited sanitation facilities, showing the gap between state welfare schemes and their implementation. Overall, the socio-economic profile confirms that despite developmental programs, tribals remain at the lower end of economic hierarchies,

which inevitably shapes their attitudes and mental health.

4.2 Attitudinal Trends

Attitude Dimension	Positive (%)	Neutral (%)	Negative (%)
Education for Children	65.0	21.3	13.7
Women’s Participation in Work	52.5	27.5	20.0
Acceptance of Modern Occupations	56.2	25.0	18.8
Preservation of Traditions	70.0	20.0	10.0

Attitudinal data reveal that education is increasingly valued, as 65% expressed positive attitudes toward children’s schooling, though many lamented financial constraints and poor infrastructure as barriers to higher education. Women’s participation in economic activities was supported by more than half the respondents, but a significant proportion (20%) still resisted, reflecting patriarchal norms deeply embedded in tribal society. Interestingly, 56.2% showed openness to modern occupations, such as salaried jobs and self-employment, especially among youth, though older respondents remained cautious and preferred agriculture-based livelihoods.

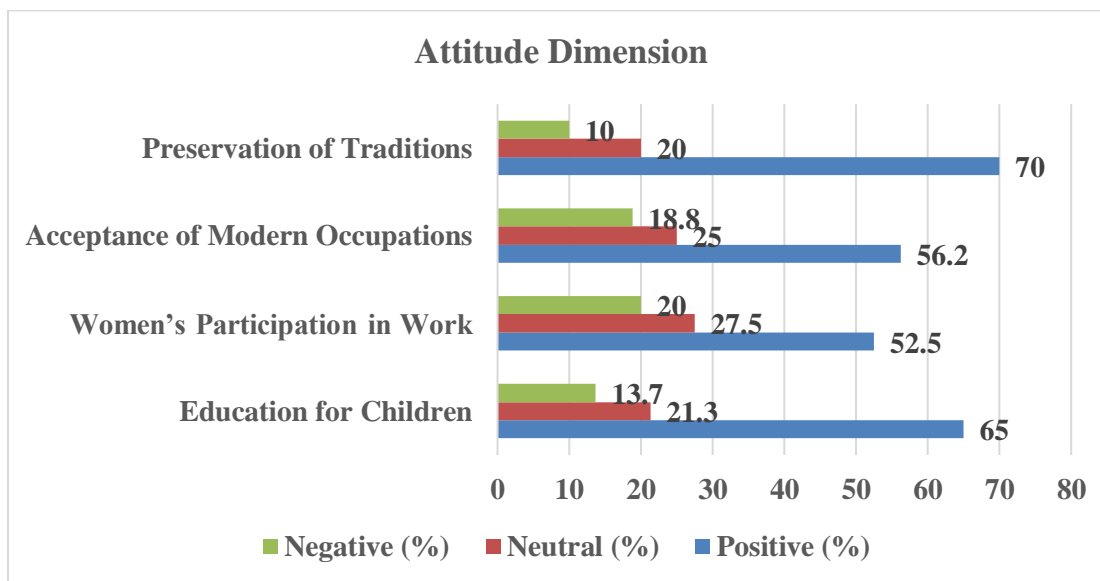


Fig.4.1: Attitudinal trends among Jharkhand’s tribal respondents

A striking finding is that 70% wanted to preserve tribal traditions, highlighting that development is not perceived as a replacement for cultural identity but as something to be balanced alongside heritage. This demonstrates a dual attitude: aspiration for modern education



and jobs, yet a desire to sustain rituals, customs, and kinship ties. Such hybrid attitudes illustrate that socio-economic transformation in tribal societies is a negotiated process, not a linear shift.

4.3 Mental Health Status

Mental Health Indicators	Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)
Stress	40.0	45.0	15.0
Anxiety	35.0	46.3	18.7
General Wellbeing	20.0	55.0	25.0

Mental health data revealed significant vulnerability. Nearly 85% of respondents experienced low to moderate stress, often linked to irregular income, crop failures, indebtedness, or uncertainty in wage labor. Anxiety was reported by 81.3%, with women more likely to describe emotional strain due to domestic responsibilities and financial insecurity. Men emphasized stress from unemployment or underemployment. General wellbeing was low for 20% of the respondents, with only one-fourth reporting high wellbeing, mostly from households with stable salaried jobs or successful self-employment ventures. Qualitative observations highlighted that socio-economic aspirations (especially among the youth) were often unmet, creating frustration and psychological strain. Older respondents appeared more resilient, possibly due to lower expectations and reliance on traditional community support networks. This demonstrates that mental health outcomes are closely intertwined with socio-economic positions and generational outlooks.

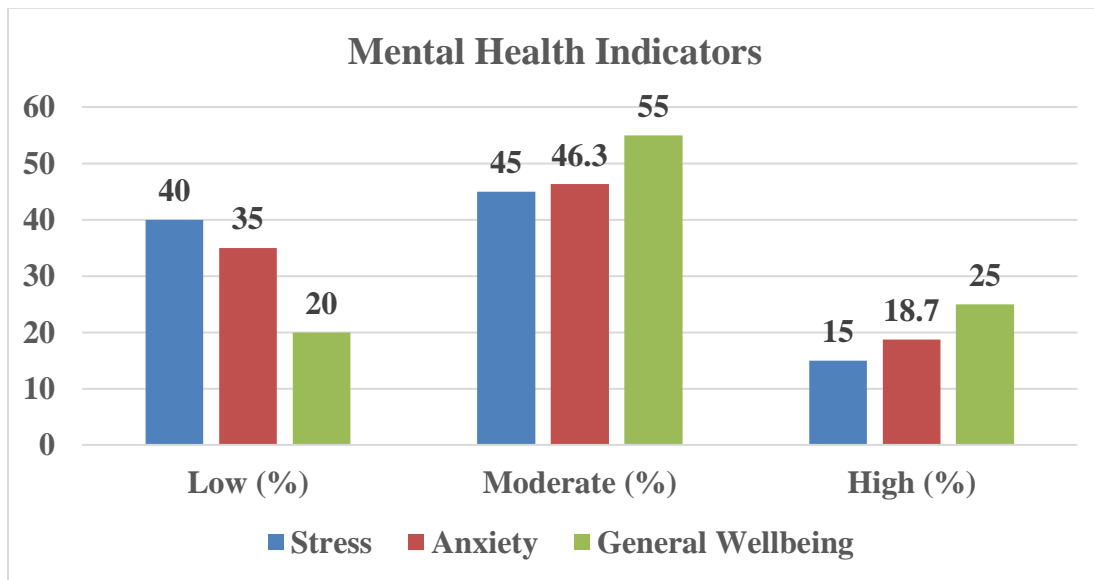


Fig.4.2: Mental health status of respondents

4.4 Statistical Analysis

1. Chi-Square Test:

- Education was significantly associated with openness to modern occupations ($\chi^2 = 12.46$, $p < 0.05$), confirming that higher educational levels foster adaptive attitudes toward new employment opportunities.
- Gender showed a significant relationship with views on women's work participation ($\chi^2 = 9.72$, $p < 0.05$), indicating generational and educational differences in perceptions of gender equality.

2. Pearson's Correlation:

- Socio-economic status was positively correlated with mental health scores ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$). Respondents with higher income and education demonstrated better psychological wellbeing, while those with poor economic status reported more stress and anxiety.

3. Multiple Regression Analysis:

- SES variables explained 36% of the variance in mental health outcomes ($R^2 = 0.36$, $F = 8.72$, $p < 0.001$).



- Income ($\beta = 0.41$) was the strongest predictor, followed by education ($\beta = 0.29$). This highlights that stable income and higher education levels are critical protective factors for mental health among tribals.

4.5 Gender and Age Variations

The gender-based analysis showed that women were more prone to anxiety (mean = 14.6) compared to men (mean = 12.1). Women explained that multiple responsibilities, financial dependence, and domestic violence in some cases contributed to their mental stress. Men, on the other hand, reported higher stress related to unemployment, underpayment, and seasonal migration for work. Age-wise, younger respondents (18–30 years) demonstrated progressive attitudes toward education and employment but simultaneously showed higher stress levels due to job scarcity. Middle-aged respondents (31–50 years) displayed moderate attitudes, balancing modern aspirations with traditional roles, but felt burdened by economic and family responsibilities. Older respondents (51+) emphasized cultural continuity and displayed emotional resilience, reflecting reliance on community-based coping mechanisms. This shows that socio-economic development is reshaping mental health and attitudes differently across gender and generations.

4.6 Comparative and Theoretical Insights

The findings align with earlier studies from Odisha and Chhattisgarh, where development improved education and women's participation but increased stress due to unemployment and social transition (Mishra, 2018; Patnaik, 2017). The positive correlation between SES and mental health confirms social causation theory, which links poverty and low social status with psychological distress. The frustration among educated unemployed youth supports the relative deprivation framework, highlighting the gap between rising aspirations and limited opportunities. Simultaneously, the desire to preserve traditions resonates with Sen's capability approach, emphasizing that development must not only expand economic opportunities but also protect cultural freedoms and psychological wellbeing. The results suggest that socio-economic transformation is not uniform; it creates multiple layers of change (economic mobility, attitudinal shifts, and mental health challenges) that require culturally sensitive and inclusive policy responses.

5. Conclusion



This study examined the relationship between socio-economic development, attitudes, and mental health among tribal communities of Jharkhand, based on a sample of 80 respondents. The findings reveal that while progress is visible in education, income diversification, and occupational mobility, a majority of households remain dependent on agriculture and low-paying wage labor. Education was found to shape attitudes significantly, with younger and more educated respondents showing greater acceptance of modern occupations and gender equality, while older generations maintained traditional norms. Income and stable employment were strongly associated with better mental health, whereas economic insecurity and irregular work contributed to stress and anxiety.

Overall, the results confirm that socio-economic development is a key determinant of both attitude formation and psychological wellbeing. Improvements in education and income enhanced positive outlooks and reduced distress, while lack of opportunities created frustration and limited aspirations. Development, therefore, must be understood not only in material terms but also in its impact on mental health and social outlook.

The findings hold important implications for tribal policy and psychology. Interventions should prioritize education and skill development, expand stable livelihood opportunities, and introduce culturally sensitive mental health programs. Gender-focused strategies are also essential to reduce women's psychological burden and support their active participation in economic life. Sustainable tribal development must integrate socio-economic progress with psychological wellbeing and cultural identity to ensure holistic outcomes.

6. Policy Implications and Suggestions

The study demonstrates that socio-economic development strongly shapes both the attitudes and mental health of Jharkhand's tribal communities. To translate these insights into practice, the following policy measures are suggested:

1. Strengthening Education and Skills

- Upgrade schools in tribal areas with adequate infrastructure, teachers, and digital facilities.
- Introduce scholarship schemes and mentoring for tribal youth, especially girls, to reduce dropout rates.



- Expand vocational and technical training aligned with local economic opportunities such as agriculture, handicrafts, and eco-tourism.
- Encourage bilingual education using both tribal languages and regional languages to improve comprehension and cultural relevance.

2. Diversifying Livelihood Opportunities

- Promote small-scale agro-industries, forest-based enterprises, and cottage industries that use local resources sustainably.
- Facilitate self-help groups (SHGs), cooperatives, and microfinance institutions to increase access to credit and savings.
- Provide market linkages and digital platforms for tribal products to ensure fair pricing and reduce dependence on middlemen.
- Introduce entrepreneurship development programs tailored for tribal youth to reduce migration and unemployment stress.

3. Mainstreaming Mental Health in Development Policy

- Establish counselling and wellness centres at block or panchayat level to address stress, anxiety, and depression.
- Train Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and local health workers in basic psychological care.
- Conduct awareness campaigns on mental health to reduce stigma and encourage early help-seeking.
- Integrate mental health services with existing healthcare schemes (e.g., NRHM, Ayushman Bharat) for better accessibility.

4. Promoting Gender-Sensitive Development



- Design income-generating programs specifically for tribal women such as weaving, food processing, and self-employment ventures.
- Support women's participation in community decision-making through representation in panchayats and village councils.
- Provide training in financial literacy and leadership to empower women economically and psychologically.
- Address gender-based stress through social support programs, reducing the dual burden of household and livelihood responsibilities.

5. Ensuring Cultural Sensitivity and Community Participation

- Involve tribal leaders and community organizations in planning and executing development projects.
- Preserve traditional knowledge, rituals, and collective practices alongside modernization efforts.
- Promote culturally adapted mental health approaches that combine traditional healing with modern counselling.
- Use local languages and participatory methods in development communication to increase trust and acceptance.

References

1. Dohrenwend, B. P. (2000). The role of adversity and stress in psychopathology: Some evidence and its implications for theory and research. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *41*(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2676357>
2. Kujur, J. (2015). *Tribal development in Jharkhand: Issues and challenges*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing.
3. Kumar, A., Kumar, R., & Anwar, P. (2024). The crucial role of commercial banks in financial inclusion and entrepreneurial development. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, *6*(2). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i02.17146>
4. Kumar, R. (2024). Exploring entrepreneurial competencies for enhancing performance in agro-based MSMEs: A case study from Bihar. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, *6*(6). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i06.29733>



5. Kumar, R. (2024). Optimizing business efficiency through strategic cost management: A framework for profit maximization in SMEs. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(6). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i06.31845>
6. Kumar, R., & Kumari, K. (2024). Enhancing economic development through inventory management optimization in agro-based industries in Bihar: A comparative study of EOQ and EPQ models. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i02.16892>
7. Kumar, R., Khan, A. K., & Goel, S. (2024). From farm to table: How AI is revolutionizing demand forecasting in agro-based industries. *Blockchain and AI in Business*, 81, 1–12.
8. Kumar, S., & Kumar, R. (2024). Exploring consumer perceptions in online shopping for sustainable economic development. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i02.16888>
9. Kumar, S., & Kumar, R. (2024). The impact of digital content marketing on the performance of five-star hotels in India. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i02.16861>
10. Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2020). *Annual report 2019–20*. Government of India. <https://tribal.nic.in>
11. Mishra, A. (2018). Education, empowerment and changing aspirations: A study of tribal youth in Odisha. *Indian Journal of Social Development*, 18(2), 245–260.
12. Patnaik, S. (2017). Industrialization and its impact on tribal communities: A case study from Chhattisgarh. *Social Change*, 47(3), 345–362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049085717715912>
13. Rao, U. (2016). *Development, displacement and deprivation: Studies on tribal communities in India*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
14. Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press.
15. Toppo, P. (2019). Socio-economic change and mental health among tribal youth: An empirical study. *Journal of Social Psychology Research*, 12(1), 56–72.
16. Xaxa, V. (2014). *Report of the high-level committee on socio-economic, health and educational status of tribal communities of India*. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.