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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHILDREN'S WELL BEING IN TRIBAL FAMILIES

¹Patel Dinaben Maganlal and ²Dr. Parulben H. Desai

¹ Research Scholar, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat

²Research Guide, Associate Professor, Vanraj Arts and Commerce College, Dharampur, Valsad, Gujarat

1. Introduction

Children's well-being is a multifaceted concept that includes their physical health, emotional development, social adjustment, educational progress, and overall quality of life. It reflects how well children are nurtured, protected, and supported within their family and community environments. In recent years, researchers and policymakers have increasingly focused on children's well-being as a vital indicator of societal progress, especially in vulnerable and marginalized populations such as tribal communities.

Tribal families in India represent a culturally rich yet economically and socially disadvantaged section of society. Often residing in remote and underdeveloped areas, tribal families face various challenges, including poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, low literacy levels, and inadequate infrastructure. These conditions significantly influence the upbringing and development of children, often affecting their well-being in complex ways.

In the tribal context, factors such as the educational level of parents, family income, and family structure can play a critical role in shaping the overall well-being of children. For instance, a mother's educational background may affect the way she nurtures and supports her children, while family income directly influences access to food, healthcare, and education. Similarly, the number of family members can impact the distribution of resources and emotional support within the household.

Considering these aspects, the present study aims to compare the well-being of children in tribal families based on selected socio-demographic variables. It attempts to understand how differences in mothers' education levels, family income, and family size influence the well-being of children in tribal settings.

Accordingly, the key objectives of this research are: To examine the impact of the mother's education level (Standard 12 and above Standard 12) on the well-being of children. To study the relationship between the family's annual income (₹2 lakh and above ₹2 lakh) and the well-being of children. To analyze the influence of the number of family members (4 members and more than 4 members) on the well-being of children.

This comparative study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on child development in tribal communities and provide meaningful insights for policy makers, educators, and social workers to develop targeted programs that promote the well-being of tribal children.

2. Children and Well Being

Children's well-being is a comprehensive concept that refers to the overall quality of life experienced by a child. It includes not only physical health and safety but also emotional stability, social development, educational opportunities, and the nurturing environment provided by family and community. A child's well-being forms the foundation for healthy development into adulthood, making it a critical area of focus for families, educators, healthcare providers, and policymakers.

Well-being in childhood is influenced by several factors, including family income, parental education, nutrition, emotional support, social relationships, and access to quality education and healthcare. Positive family dynamics, especially supportive parenting, play a significant role in shaping a child's emotional and mental health. Children who grow up in safe, stable, and stimulating environments are more likely to perform better academically, develop healthy relationships, and manage stress effectively.

In marginalized or economically disadvantaged communities, such as tribal or rural populations, children often face additional challenges that can negatively impact their well-being. Poverty, malnutrition, limited access to education, and lack of proper healthcare are common barriers. In such contexts, even basic needs may be unmet, which affects the overall development of children.



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Therefore, understanding and promoting children's well-being is essential for building a healthy, productive, and equitable society. Governments and NGOs must work collaboratively to ensure that all children—regardless of their socio-economic background—receive the care, education, and support they need to thrive. Investing in children's well-being is not only a moral responsibility but also a smart investment in the future.

3. Recent Conceptualizations of Well Being

In recent years, the concept of well-being has evolved beyond traditional definitions centered on physical health or economic status. Modern conceptualizations view well-being as a multidimensional construct that includes emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of life. Researchers now emphasize subjective well-being, which refers to individuals' own evaluations of their lives, including life satisfaction, happiness, and emotional balance.

The World Health Organization defines well-being as “a state in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to the community.” This definition reflects a shift toward recognizing personal fulfillment, social connectedness, and resilience as key components of well-being.

Contemporary models also highlight cultural and contextual factors, acknowledging that well-being is influenced by one's environment, relationships, and opportunities for growth, especially in diverse populations such as children in tribal communities.

4. The Study's Need and Significance

The well-being of children is a crucial indicator of a society's social and human development. In tribal communities, children often grow up in socio-economically disadvantaged conditions that can affect their overall well-being. Despite numerous government schemes and educational reforms, tribal populations continue to face issues like poverty, limited access to quality education, poor healthcare, and social exclusion. These challenges can directly impact the physical, emotional, and social development of children.

This study is significant because it focuses on a vulnerable yet often overlooked group—tribal children—and examines how various socio-demographic factors such as maternal education, family income, and family size influence their well-being. Understanding these relationships is essential for creating culturally sensitive and targeted policies that promote the healthy development of tribal children.

Moreover, the study will contribute to existing literature by providing empirical data on children's well-being within the unique context of tribal families. It will also help educators, social workers, and policymakers design more effective child welfare programs tailored to the specific needs of tribal communities. By addressing the gaps in well-being, the study aims to support inclusive development and ensure that tribal children receive equal opportunities for growth and success.

5. Objective of the Study

The following objectives were framed in this study.

1. To examine the impact of the mother's education level (Standard 12 and above Standard 12) on the well-being of children.
2. To study the relationship between the family's annual income (₹2 lakh and above ₹2 lakh) and the well-being of children.
3. To analyze the influence of the number of family members (4 members and more than 4 members) on the well-being of children.

6. Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were tested in this study.

1. There will be no significant difference in well-being with reference to the mother's education (Standard 12 and above Standard 12).
2. There will be no significant difference in well-being with reference to the family's annual income (2 lakh and above 2 lakh).
3. There will be no significant difference in well-being with reference to the number of family members (4 members and more than 4 members).



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7. Methodology

The present study aims to examine the well-being of children in tribal families with reference to selected socio-demographic variables. This section outlines the research method, sample, tools used, data collection procedure, and statistical techniques applied for data analysis.

7.1. Sample

The total sample consisted of 360 children belonging to tribal families. The participants were selected from different villages and areas of Navsari District. The sample was chosen using a random sampling technique, ensuring representation across key variables such as mother's education level, family income, and number of family members.

7.2. Tool for Data Collection

To measure the well-being of children, the General Well-Being Scale developed by Ashok K. Kalia and Anita Deswal was used. This standardized psychological tool is reliable and valid for assessing various dimensions of well-being such as emotional, physical, and social health. The scale provides a comprehensive overview of an individual's general sense of well-being.

7.3. Method of Data Collection

Data were collected personally by the researcher from the selected tribal areas in Navsari District. Respondents were given instructions before administering the scale, and responses were recorded with full confidentiality and clarity.

7.4. Statistical Techniques

To analyze the collected data and examine differences in well-being across different groups, the t-test was employed. This statistical technique was used to determine the significance of differences between two groups based on variables like mother's education, family income, and number of family members.

8. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

HO-01: There will be no significant difference in well-being with reference to the mother's education (Standard 12 and above Standard 12).

Table- 1

Significant difference in well-being with reference to the mother's education (Standard 12 and above Standard 12).

Variables	N	MEAN	SD	SED	t-value	SIGNIFICANT LEVEL
Standard 12	121	169.12	72.45	6.42	2.94	Significant**
Above Standard 12	239	188.00	48.26			
0.05 = 1.96*, 0.01 = 2.58**						

The above table shows the comparison of children's well-being based on their mother's education level—specifically between those whose mothers are educated up to Standard 12 and those above Standard 12.

- The mean well-being score for children whose mothers studied up to Standard 12 is 169.12, while for those whose mothers studied beyond Standard 12, it is 188.00.
- The calculated t-value is 2.94, which is higher than the critical value at the 0.01 significance level (2.58).
- This indicates that the difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting a real difference in well-being based on maternal education.

The null hypothesis (HO-01), which stated that "There will be no significant difference in well-being with reference to the mother's education," is rejected.

There is a significant difference, and children of mothers with education above Standard 12 show higher well-being than those whose mothers have education only up to Standard 12.

HO-02: There will be no significant difference in well-being with reference to the family's annual income (2 lakh and above 2 lakh).



Table- 2

Significant difference in well-being with reference to the family's annual income (2 lakh and above 2 lakh).

Variables	N	MEAN	SD	SED	t-value	SIGNIFICANT LEVEL
2 Lakh	60	206.53	48.16	8.08	3.70	Significant**
Above 2 Lakh	300	176.69	58.73			
0.05 = 1.96*, 0.01 = 2.58**						

This table compares the well-being of children based on their family's annual income, divided into two groups: families earning up to ₹2 lakh and those earning above ₹2 lakh.

- Children from families with an annual income of ₹2 lakh have a mean well-being score of 206.53, whereas those from families earning above ₹2 lakh have a mean score of 176.69.
- The t-value is 3.70, which is greater than the critical value at the 0.01 significance level (2.58).
- This shows that the difference in mean well-being scores is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

The null hypothesis (HO-02), which proposed that *there will be no significant difference in well-being based on the family's annual income*, is rejected.

There is a significant difference, with children from families earning up to ₹2 lakh showing higher well-being than those from higher-income families. This finding may reflect stronger familial bonding, shared struggles, or resource-sharing practices common in low-income tribal families.

HO-03: There will be no significant difference in well-being with reference to the number of family members (4 members and more than 4 members).

Table- 3

Significant difference in well-being with reference to the number of family members (4 members and more than 4 members).

Variables	N	MEAN	SD	SED	t-value	SIGNIFICANT LEVEL
4 Members	265	197.21	50.85	6.22	9.47	Significant**
More Than 4 Members	95	138.29	55.29			
0.05 = 1.96*, 0.01 = 2.58**						

This table compares the well-being of children based on the number of family members—specifically, families with exactly 4 members and those with more than 4 members.

- The mean well-being score of children from 4-member families is 197.21, which is significantly higher than the 138.29 mean score of children from families with more than 4 members.
- The calculated t-value is 9.47, which far exceeds the critical value at the 0.01 significance level (2.58).
- This indicates a highly significant difference in well-being between the two groups.

The null hypothesis (HO-03), which stated that *there will be no significant difference in well-being with reference to the number of family members*, is rejected.

There is a significant difference, and children in smaller families (4 members) tend to have higher levels of well-being compared to those in larger families (more than 4 members). This may be due to better resource availability, more parental attention, and reduced competition among siblings in smaller households.

9. Findings

The findings of the present study are reported below.

1. Significant Difference in Well-Being Based on Mother's Education

The study revealed a significant difference in children's well-being with reference to their mother's education. Children whose mothers were educated **above Standard 12** had **higher well-being scores** compared to those whose mothers had studied only up to **Standard 12**. This suggests that higher maternal education positively influences children's overall development and well-being.

2. Significant Difference in Well-Being Based on Family's Annual Income

A statistically significant difference was observed in children's well-being based on **family income levels**.



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Surprisingly, children from families earning ₹2 lakh or less annually had higher well-being scores than those from families earning more than ₹2 lakh. This indicates that well-being in tribal families may not be solely dependent on income, and other cultural or emotional support factors might play a more vital role.

3. Significant Difference in Well-Being Based on Number of Family Members

The analysis showed a highly significant difference in well-being with respect to family size. Children from families with 4 members reported higher well-being compared to those from families with more than 4 members. This suggests that smaller families may provide better attention, care, and emotional support, contributing to improved child well-being in tribal communities.

10. Recommendations

1. Promote Maternal Education in Tribal Areas:

Since higher maternal education is associated with better child well-being, government and NGOs should implement targeted programs to encourage and support the education of tribal women beyond Standard 12. This could include scholarships, adult education initiatives, and community awareness campaigns.

2. Support Small Family Norms through Awareness Campaigns:

Given that children from smaller families show higher levels of well-being, awareness programs promoting the benefits of small family size should be introduced in tribal regions. These programs can focus on family planning, parental care, and optimal resource allocation for child development.

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