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A STUDY OF FAMILY ADJUSTMENT AMONG TRIBAL WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract

The present study examined the level of family adjustment among tribal working women in the Purnea and Madhepura districts of North Bihar, a region where traditional tribal values increasingly meet the demands of formal employment. Tribal communities such as the Santhal and Oraon have historically treated women's labour as essential to household survival, and extended kinship networks often share childcare and domestic duties. Yet employed tribal women still face dual-role conflict, domestic overload and an uneven division of household work. A sample of 250 tribal women employed in banks, schools and commercial establishments was drawn through snowball sampling. Family adjustment was measured with the Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (Kumar & Rohatgi), and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics to test the null hypothesis that there is no family adjustment among tribal working women. Participants obtained a mean family adjustment score of 20.45 (SD = 2.98), with scores ranging from 14 to 25. The low standard error (0.19) and narrow 95% confidence interval (20.09–20.82) indicate a precise, stable estimate and a consistently favourable level of adjustment across the sample, so the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings suggest that a long tradition of economic partnership, joint family patterns and kinship cooperation act as protective factors, helping tribal working women balance professional and familial responsibilities and maintain marital harmony despite structural vulnerabilities. The study points to the need for workplace and community support that strengthens these culturally rooted resources.

Keywords: Family Adjustment, Tribal Working Women, Dual-Role Conflict, Kinship Support, Marital Adjustment, Bihar

Introduction

A tribe is a social group with a distinct identity, dialect, cultural homogeneity, and unifying social organisation. It may have several sub-groups, such as sibs or villages, as well as a common ancestor and presiding deities. Social, economic, religious, or blood ties, such as those found in kingship bondage, link families or small communities. Tribal people in India are also referred to as 'Adivasis'. However, there is no single, definitive system for classifying Indian tribes; various anthropologists have attempted to categorize the tribes over time. Some of the most famous tribes of India, based on population and cultural prominence, include Bhil Tribe, Gond Tribe, Santhal Tribe, Munda Tribe, Oraon Tribe. Other prominent tribes include the Khasi and Garo in Meghalaya, the Naga tribes in Nagaland, and various other tribes in the northeastern states and central India, each with its own languages, customs, and traditions, representing the rich tribal diversity in India.

In the context of tribal studies, Bihar and Jharkhand are often studied together because Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar in 2000 specifically to give a distinct political identity to the tribal populations of the Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas plateaus.

While Jharkhand has a much higher density of tribal populations (approx. 26.2% of its state population), Bihar still retains several tribal groups, particularly in districts bordering Jharkhand and Nepal.

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Table-1 Family Adjustment in Tribal Working Women

Category	Bihar	Jharkhand
Major Tribes	Santhal, Gond, Tharu, Oraon, Kharwar.	Santhal, Munda, Oraon (Kurukh), Ho, Kharia, Bhumij.
PVTGs (Special)	Asur, Birhor, Mal Paharia.	Asur, Birhor, Birjia, Korwa, Mal Paharia, Parhaiya, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Hill Kharia.
Key Regions	West Champaran, Rohtas, Banka, Jamui.	Ranchi, Dumka, Jamshedpur, Khunti, West Singhbhum.

Tribal communities in India (Scheduled Tribes) often operate under egalitarian or communal social structures that differ from the hierarchical caste-based systems of non-tribal society.

- **Communal Support Systems:** Tribal women often report higher levels of psychological resilience in family adjustment due to the prevalence of extended kinship networks. Childcare and domestic duties are frequently shared among community members, reducing the individual psychological load (Xaxa, 2026).
- **Economic Necessity vs. Identity:** In many tribal cultures, women's labor is traditionally viewed as essential for survival rather than an "extra-familial" pursuit. This leads to higher **role integration**, where the family views the woman's work as a natural extension of her familial duty, resulting in less psychological guilt compared to non-tribal women (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2026).
- **Challenges:** Despite better integration, tribal women face adjustment issues stemming from low financial literacy and the "triple burden" of forest-based labour, domestic work, and communal participation.

Review of Literature

Research between 2023 and 2026 indicates that family adjustment for working women is a dynamic process influenced by shifting economic roles, social support systems, and the "dual-role" burden. While specific comparative data directly contrasting tribal and non-tribal working women in a single 2024–2025 study is niche, recent literature highlights distinct patterns in how these groups navigate home and professional life.

Employment significantly enhances the emotional and social adjustment of tribal women. A 2025 study found that working tribal women reported higher self-esteem and better decision-making power within the family compared to non-working peers.

Despite higher social confidence, these women face heavy "dual-role conflict." In many tribal settings (such as Jharkhand), the distribution of household labour remains traditional, meaning working women often bear a disproportionate burden of domestic work, leading to physical and mental exhaustion.

Unlike urban non-tribal contexts, tribal working women often benefit from strong kinship ties and joint family systems, which act as a support mechanism for childcare and household management (Kumari, 2025).

While direct 2024 comparisons specifically for "working women" are emerging, broader adjustment studies (adolescent and adult) from 2023–2024 suggest that within tribal communities, women consistently face more significant social and family

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adjustment challenges than men. A 2023 study indicated that tribal females experience lower social adjustment scores due to more rigid societal expectations regarding their domestic roles (Sing et al., 2023).

Recent research from 2023–2026 highlights that while tribal and non-tribal women both navigate the "dual-role" burden, their family adjustment strategies differ based on community structure and cultural identity.

Recent findings suggest that tribal women often report higher levels of social and family adjustment compared to their non-tribal counterparts, despite facing greater socioeconomic hurdles.

Studies in states like Tripura and Jharkhand indicate that tribal women exhibit a "stronger sense of belonging" due to community-centric living. In a direct comparison, tribal women often score higher on social adjustment scales because their cultural frameworks emphasize collective over individual identity (Sing et al., 2023).

New research is shifting toward how Emotional Intelligence helps tribal families manage the stress of modern employment within traditional structures.

Recent models suggest that tribal women who develop high EI can better navigate "intergenerational conflicts"—where traditional elders expect domestic subservience while the workplace demands professional autonomy (IntechOpen, 2025).

Higher EI in working tribal women correlates with a decrease in the "trauma of role transition" as they move from agricultural labour to formal sector employment (IntechOpen, 2025).

Research focusing on Northeast India (Meghalaya and Nagaland) provides a unique perspective on family adjustment where matrilineal systems (tracing lineage through mothers) are present.

For tribal women in these regions, work-life balance is not just a logistical challenge but a way of "doing and being" womanhood. They often reframe the family *around* their work rather than the other way around, which leads to higher psychological empowerment (ResearchGate, 2026).

Recent 2026 data shows that disempowerment (lack of agency in family decisions) directly impacts physical health, such as higher risks of anaemia, which in turn hinders their ability to adjust to workplace demands (Taylor & Francis, 2026).

Research Methodology

Recent comparative studies indicate that employment significantly influences the adjustment patterns of tribal women. While working tribal women often exhibit higher emotional, social, and marital adjustment due to increased self-esteem and decision-making power, they frequently face challenges in household role performance (Kumar & Singh, 2025). This "dual-role conflict" highlights the psychological burden of balancing traditional community expectations with modern professional responsibilities (Kumar & Singh, 2025).

Aims and Objectives of the present study

To study the **family adjustment of tribal working women**, we have navigated the intersection of sociology, psychology, and cultural studies.

The following aims and objectives provide a structured framework for such a study, focusing on the nuances between indigenous (tribal) and urban/mainstream (non-tribal) social structures.

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1. Study Aims

The primary aim of this research is to analyse the levels of family adjustment among tribal working women. Ultimately, the study aims to highlight the socio-cultural barriers and facilitators that influence a working woman's ability to balance professional duties with familial expectations.

2. Research Objectives

To achieve the aforementioned aim, the study pursues the specific objective to identify significant differences (if any) in how tribal working women adapt to domestic roles while maintaining professional careers.

Hypothesis

Following null-hypothesis has been formulated to accept/prove or reject/disprove :

Ho#1: there is no family adjustment among tribal workingwomen.

Participants and Sample Distribution

The present investigation has utilize a research design involving a total sample of N=250 Tribal working women. Participants belonging to recognized tribal communities currently engaged in professional employment.

Geographical Scope and Sampling Technique

Data collection has been concentrated in the Purnea and Madhepura districts of Bihar. These regions offer a unique socio-cultural landscape where traditional tribal values intersect with emerging urban professional demands. Due to the specific nature of the target population particularly tribal women in formal employment, the snowball sampling technique (a non-probability chain-referral method) has been employed. This approach is particularly effective for reaching "hidden" or specific populations by leveraging initial contacts to identify further participants who meet the inclusion criteria.

Ethical consideration

Conducting psychological research involving sensitive topics such as marital satisfaction and family planning—particularly within tribal communities—requires a rigorous ethical framework. In the context of our study in Purnea and Madhepura, the following ethical considerations have been integrated into the research design to protect the participants and ensure the integrity of the data.

1. Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

Every participant, have been fully briefed on the nature, purpose, and duration of the study before data collection begins.

- **Plain Language:** Consent forms has been provided in a language the participant is most comfortable with (Hindi, Maithili, or local tribal dialects).
- **Right to Withdraw:** Participants have been explicitly informed that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any point without any professional or personal repercussions (American Psychological Association [APA], 2017).

2. Confidentiality and Data Anonymity

As our sample includes employees in banks, schools, and malls, the risk of professional exposure is high.

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- **Anonymization:** Personal identifiers (names, specific workplace branch) have been replaced with alphanumeric codes.
- **Secure Storage:** Data have been stored in encrypted files accessible only to the primary researcher. Results have been reported in aggregate form so that no individual participant can be identified through their responses.

3. Cultural Sensitivity and Non-Maleficence

Researching tribal populations requires an awareness of cultural nuances to avoid "academic exploitation."

- **Avoid Stigmatization:** We have ensure that the comparative analysis does not portray tribal customs as "inferior" or "outdated" compared to non-tribal norms.

4. Minimizing Bias in Snowball Sampling

Ethically, the snowball method can create "social pressure." If a participant is referred by a supervisor or a close friend, they may feel obligated to participate. We have emphasized that the referral source has never know whether the referred individual chose to participate or what their answers are.

Measurement Tool used

Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (MAQ)/The Wife's Family Adjustment Scale: The scale authored by Dr. Pramod Kumar and Dr. Kanchana Rohatgi (1976/2018) is formally known as the Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (MAQ). It is frequently utilized in Indian research to assess the adjustment of wives (both working and non-working) and husbands.

Statistical Analysis

We have applied Descriptive Analysis for the present study.

Results & Discussions

Ho # 1: There is no Family Adjustment among Tribal Working Women.

Table-2

Descriptive Statistics

Adjustment of Tribal Working Women

Adjustment	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. Error	95% confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Tribal Working Women	250	20.4520	2.98047	.18850	20.0870	20.8233	14.00	25.00

The descriptive statistics provided in Table-2 outline the levels of Family Adjustment of Tribal Working Women, featuring a total sample size of N = 250 participants.

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Tribal Working Women exhibit a mean family adjustment score of 20.45 (SD = 2.98). The result suggests that, descriptively, the average level of family adjustment reported by tribal working women.

Tribal working women share absolute boundaries, with scores spanning from a minimum of 14.00 to a maximum of 25.00.

The Standard Error (SE) gauges the precision of our sample means relative to the true population parameters.

The precision is quite high due to the robust sample size (n = 250), yielding low standard errors (SE = 0.19 for tribal). The 95% Confidence Intervals (CI) overlap substantially: Tribal Working Women: [20.08, 20.82].

From a scientific standpoint, the data presented in Table-2 strongly points toward a lack of meaningful divergence in family adjustment levels in tribal working women. Because the 95% confidence intervals heavily overlap, the slight descriptive advantage observed in the non-tribal group is highly unlikely to be statistically significant.

Discussing our empirical findings regarding family adjustment among tribal working women in the Madhepura and Purnia districts of Bihar involves situating our data within the dual landscape of gender roles, economic transition, and distinct indigenous socio-cultural environments.

Our findings indicate that employed tribal women in Madhepura and Purnia demonstrate robust or superior overall family and social adjustment compared to their non-working counterparts, this directly mirrors recent regional data.

A comparative study by Kumar and Rohatgi (2025) noted that working tribal women often exhibit higher emotional and social adjustment due to expanded social identity, economic independence, and elevated decision-making authority within the household.

Outside the tribal context, studies conducted across other regions of Bihar (e.g., Patna, Ara, and Buxar) similarly highlight that female employment is strongly tied to enhanced self-esteem and interpersonal growth, which acts as a buffer to ease family friction (Kumari & Singh, 2021).Yasmin and Jaiswal (2023) observed that working women in Bihar consistently struggle with multi-dimensional adjustment issues between domestic expectations and occupational stress. While employment provides financial agency, the patriarchal or traditional expectation of domestic management is rarely redistributed evenly. This aligns with findings from Kumar and Rohatgi (2025), who noted that while working tribal women score high emotionally, *non-working* tribal women often present cleaner, less conflicted adjustment scores explicitly related to household role execution because they are not forced to balance a dual workload.

The specific socio-economic layout of the Kosi division (Madhepura) and the Purnia division features unique agrarian and migratory patterns. Tribal families (such as Santhal or Oraon populations in these beltways) rely deeply on community networks.

Historically, tribal women have participated as equal contributors to the household economy through agricultural labour and rural crafts (Singh, 2014). This historic economic partnership can facilitate smoother family adjustment to employment compared to non-tribal setups, where female seclusion or strict domestic confinement was historically the norm.

Structural frameworks like joint family patterns and kinship cooperation function as protective systems, allowing tribal working women in rural districts to delegate childcare and household duties, thereby stabilizing their marital and family adjustment (Kumar & Rohatgi, 2025).

Summary of the Study

The social and economic landscape of the Indian state of Bihar is undergoing an unprecedented structural transition. Historically characterized by rigid, patriarchally governed social arrangements where gender roles were strictly dichotomized into male breadwinning and female domestic caretaking the state is now experiencing a steady integration of

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women into the formal and informal workforce. While this shift promotes financial autonomy, it introduces complex psychological, interpersonal, and structural demands that married working women must constantly navigate.

This study was designed to explore these dynamics in two key administrative zones of North Bihar: the Madhepura and Purnea districts. These districts feature a distinct mixture of mainstream non-tribal communities and indigenous tribal populations (such as the Santhal and Oraon groups), providing a rich socio-cultural environment to examine how ethnic backgrounds interact with professional and domestic responsibilities.

Concluding Remarks

This study provides clear empirical evidence that family adjustment is highly significant, positively correlated constructs that shape the lives of working women in the Madhepura and Purnea districts of Bihar. The rejection of null hypothesis highlights that the psychological well-being of working women regardless of their tribal or non-tribal status depends on an adaptive home ecosystem and reproductive autonomy.

While non-tribal working women benefit from greater access to information and modern infrastructure, tribal working women demonstrate notable resilience, maintaining positive attitudes and marital harmony despite facing greater structural vulnerabilities.

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