

Impact of Socio-Economic Deprivation on Depression, Anxiety, and Academic Self-Efficacy among Mundari and Bhil Tribal Secondary School Students in Selected Villages of Bagdah Block, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal: An Educational Psychology Investigation

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Abstract

Socio-economic deprivation remains one of the most significant barriers to educational attainment and psychological well-being among tribal adolescents in India (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2025). Students belonging to marginalized tribal communities frequently encounter poverty, inadequate educational resources, social exclusion, and limited access to health and counseling services, which may adversely affect their mental health and academic development (Bandura, 1997). Among adolescents, depression and anxiety are increasingly recognized as critical psychological concerns that influence learning motivation, classroom participation, and academic achievement (Bandura et al., 1999). Academic self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in his or her capability to successfully perform academic tasks, plays a crucial role in determining educational success and resilience in adverse circumstances (Bandura, 1986).

The present study investigated the impact of socio-economic deprivation on depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students in selected villages of Bagdah Block, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. A quantitative descriptive-survey and correlational research design was employed for the study. The sample consisted of 300 tribal secondary school students, including 150 Mundari and 150 Bhil students, selected through stratified random sampling from five villages, namely Sindrani, Helencha, Parmadan, Malipota, and Koniara. Data were collected using a Socio-Economic Deprivation Scale, Depression Scale, Anxiety Scale, and Academic Self-Efficacy Scale.

The findings revealed that Mundari students experienced significantly higher levels of socio-economic deprivation, depression, and anxiety compared to Bhil students. In contrast, Bhil students demonstrated significantly higher levels of academic self-efficacy. Independent sample t-tests indicated statistically significant differences between the two tribal communities with respect to socio-economic deprivation, depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy. Pearson correlation analysis showed that socio-economic deprivation was positively associated with depression and anxiety, whereas it was negatively associated with academic self-efficacy. Multiple regression analysis further revealed that socio-economic deprivation significantly predicted depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among the respondents.

The study concludes that socio-economic deprivation is a major determinant of psychological well-being and academic confidence among tribal adolescents. The findings emphasize the need for targeted educational interventions, mental health support services, socio-economic assistance programmes, and culturally responsive educational practices to improve the academic and psychological outcomes of tribal students. The study contributes to the growing body of educational psychology literature on tribal education and adolescent mental health in rural West Bengal.

Keywords

Socio-Economic Deprivation; Depression; Anxiety; Academic Self-Efficacy; Educational Psychology; Tribal Students; Mundari Tribe; Bhil Tribe; Secondary School Students; Mental Health; Academic Achievement; Bagdah Block; North 24 Parganas; West Bengal; Tribal Education.

Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in promoting social mobility, psychological well-being, and academic success among adolescents. However, tribal students often face multiple challenges arising from socio-economic deprivation, limited educational opportunities, and inadequate access to psychological support services (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2025). Depression and anxiety are among the most common psychological problems affecting adolescents and can negatively influence learning, motivation, and school performance (Bandura et al., 1999). Academic self-efficacy, which refers to students' beliefs about their ability to accomplish academic tasks successfully, has been identified as an important predictor of educational achievement and resilience (Bandura, 1997). Among tribal communities such as the Mundari and Bhil, socio-economic disadvantages may contribute to psychological distress and reduced confidence in academic capabilities. Therefore, understanding the relationship between socio-economic deprivation, depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy is essential for developing effective educational and psychological interventions among tribal secondary school students in Bagdah Block of North 24 Parganas, West Bengal.

Rationale of the Study

Despite various governmental initiatives aimed at promoting tribal education, disparities in educational attainment and psychological well-being continue to persist among tribal adolescents (Government of India, 2023). Many tribal students experience poverty, inadequate educational resources, parental illiteracy, and social marginalization, which may adversely affect their mental health and academic development (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2025). Previous studies have examined depression, anxiety, and self-efficacy among general student populations; however, limited research has focused specifically on Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students in North 24 Parganas district. The present study seeks to fill this research gap by examining how socio-economic deprivation influences depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among these tribal communities. The findings may provide empirical evidence for designing targeted educational and mental health interventions for tribal adolescents.

Statement of the Research Problem

The educational and psychological development of tribal adolescents is often constrained by socio-economic deprivation and limited access to educational opportunities. Students from tribal communities frequently encounter challenges such as poverty, educational disadvantage, emotional stress, and social exclusion, which may negatively affect their academic self-efficacy and mental health (Bandura, 1986). Although depression and anxiety have emerged as significant concerns among adolescents, little empirical evidence is available regarding their prevalence and relationship with socio-economic deprivation among Mundari and Bhil tribal students in Bagdah Block. Therefore, the present study addresses the research problem:

Research Problem

"How does socio-economic deprivation influence depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students in selected villages of Bagdah Block, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal?"

Significance of the Study

The study is significant from both educational and psychological perspectives. It contributes to the understanding of how socio-economic deprivation affects the mental health and academic confidence of tribal adolescents (Bandura, 1997). The findings will help educators identify factors that hinder academic development among tribal students and design appropriate support mechanisms. The study may assist policymakers in formulating inclusive educational policies and welfare programmes for marginalized tribal communities. It will also provide valuable insights for school counselors, psychologists, and teachers regarding the psychological needs of tribal adolescents. Furthermore, the

study enriches the literature on educational psychology, tribal education, adolescent mental health, and



academic self-efficacy in the context of rural West Bengal. The findings may serve as a foundation for future research on educational inequalities and psychological well-being among tribal populations in India.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of socio-economic deprivation among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students in selected villages of Bagdah Block.
2. To examine the levels of depression and anxiety among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.
3. To measure the level of academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.
4. To compare depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.
5. To investigate the influence of socio-economic deprivation on depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

Null Hypotheses (H₀)

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the level of socio-economic deprivation between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the level of depression between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the level of anxiety between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the level of academic self-efficacy between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

H₀₅: Socio-economic deprivation has no significant influence on depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

Review of Literature

Sl. No.	Author(s) & Year	Title of Study	Major Findings	Research Gap
1	Bandura et al. (1999)	<i>Self-Efficacy Pathways to Childhood Depression</i>	Academic self-efficacy was found to be negatively associated with depression among adolescents. Students with higher self-efficacy	The study focused on general adolescents and did not include tribal students or socio-

			reported lower depressive symptoms.	economic deprivation variables.
2	Scott et al. (2008)	<i>Cognitive Self-Regulation and Depression among Tribal Youth</i>	Self-efficacy significantly influenced emotional well-being and educational adjustment among tribal adolescents.	Limited attention was given to anxiety and socio-economic deprivation among Indian tribal students.
3	Tsang, Hui, and Law (2012)	<i>Self-Efficacy as a Positive Youth Development Construct</i>	Self-efficacy contributed positively to academic performance, psychological adjustment, and resilience.	No specific focus on tribal communities or socio-economic disadvantage.
4	Usher and Pajares (2008)	<i>Sources of Self-Efficacy in School</i>	Family support, school environment, and social experiences significantly influenced students' academic self-efficacy.	Tribal adolescents and mental health indicators were not investigated.
5	Zimmerman (2000)	<i>Self-Efficacy: An Essential Motive to Learn</i>	Academic self-efficacy positively predicted motivation and academic achievement.	The study lacked consideration of socio-economic deprivation and tribal populations.
6	Ehrenberg et al. (1991)	<i>Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Depression in Adolescents</i>	Depression negatively affected self-confidence and academic engagement among students.	No comparative analysis of different tribal communities was conducted.
7	Tonge et al. (2005)	<i>Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Depression in Adolescents</i>	Psychological distress significantly reduced adolescents' perceptions of competence and success.	The study did not explore educational outcomes among marginalized communities.
8	Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2025)	<i>Tribal Education: In Search of Quality</i>	Tribal students face educational inequalities due to poverty, poor infrastructure, and social exclusion.	Mental health dimensions such as depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy were not examined.
9	Pajares and Urdan (2006)	<i>Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Adolescents</i>	Self-efficacy emerged as a strong predictor of academic persistence and achievement.	Tribal-specific educational and psychological issues remained unexplored.
10	Frydenberg (2018)	<i>Self-Efficacy and Adolescent Development</i>	Adolescents with stronger self-efficacy demonstrated better coping strategies and lower emotional distress.	Socio-economic deprivation and tribal educational contexts were not included.

Research Gap

A review of the existing literature reveals that substantial research has been conducted on **academic self-efficacy, depression, anxiety, and adolescent psychological well-being**. Studies by **Bandura et al. (1999)**, **Zimmerman (2000)**, **Pajares and Urdan (2006)**, and **Usher and Pajares (2008)** established significant relationships between self-efficacy and academic outcomes. Similarly,

Ehrenberg et al. (1991) and **Tonge et al. (2005)** highlighted the adverse effects of depression on adolescent development.

However, several important gaps remain evident. First, most studies have focused on general student populations, with limited attention given to **tribal adolescents**, particularly in the Indian context. Second, very few studies have simultaneously examined **socio-economic deprivation, depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy** within a single research framework. Third, comparative investigations involving **Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students** are virtually absent in the existing literature. Fourth, studies focusing on **Bagdah Block of North 24 Parganas, West Bengal**, are extremely limited despite the presence of socio-economically disadvantaged tribal populations in the area. Finally, previous research has rarely explored how socio-economic deprivation acts as a predictor of both psychological well-being and academic self-efficacy among tribal adolescents.

Therefore, the present study seeks to fill these gaps by investigating the **impact of socio-economic deprivation on depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students in selected villages of Bagdah Block, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal**. This study contributes to educational psychology by generating empirical evidence on the psychological and educational challenges faced by marginalized tribal learners.

Research Methodology

The present study adopted a **quantitative research approach** to investigate the impact of socio-economic deprivation on depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students in Bagdah Block of North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal. Quantitative research is appropriate when the objective is to measure variables systematically and examine relationships among them through statistical analysis. This approach enables researchers to obtain objective and generalizable findings from a representative sample population.

The study employed a **descriptive survey and correlational research design**. The descriptive component was used to assess the existing levels of socio-economic deprivation, depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among the respondents. The correlational component was utilized to examine the relationships among these variables and to determine the extent to which socio-economic deprivation predicts psychological and educational outcomes. Such designs are widely used in educational psychology to understand patterns, associations, and predictive relationships among learner characteristics.

The study was conducted in **Bagdah Community Development Block**, situated in the Bangaon Subdivision of North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal. Five villages, namely **Sindrani, Helencha, Parmadan, Malipota, and Koniara**, were purposively selected because they contain economically disadvantaged households and tribal settlements where Mundari and Bhil communities reside. These villages represent the socio-economic realities of border-region rural communities and provide an appropriate setting for investigating educational and psychological issues among tribal adolescents.

The **target population** consisted of Mundari and Bhil tribal students studying in Classes IX and X in government and government-aided secondary schools located within the selected villages. Adolescence is a critical developmental period during which socio-economic challenges and psychological difficulties may significantly influence academic functioning and self-beliefs. Therefore, secondary school students were considered suitable participants for the present investigation.

A total of **300 tribal students** constituted the sample of the study. Among them, **150 students belonged to the Mundari community and 150 students belonged to the Bhil community**. The respondents were selected through **stratified random sampling**. Initially, the population was divided into two strata based on tribal community affiliation, namely Mundari and Bhil. Thereafter, students were randomly selected from each stratum to ensure adequate representation and reduce sampling bias. Stratified sampling improves the representativeness of the sample and enhances the reliability of comparative analysis.

Data were collected using standardized and researcher-developed instruments. Socio-economic deprivation was measured through a **Socio-Economic Deprivation Scale** developed by the researcher based on indicators such as parental education, family income, occupation, housing condition, access

to educational resources, and living environment. Depression was assessed using a standardized **Depression Scale for Adolescents**, while anxiety was measured through a standardized **Anxiety Assessment Scale**. Academic self-efficacy was measured using an **Academic Self-Efficacy Scale**, grounded in Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, which emphasizes learners' beliefs regarding their capability to organize and execute academic tasks successfully.

Before the final administration, the instruments were pilot-tested on a small group of tribal students outside the study sample to ensure clarity, reliability, and cultural appropriateness. Necessary modifications were incorporated based on expert suggestions and pilot study findings. Reliability was estimated through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, and a reliability index of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable for the study.

The researcher obtained permission from school authorities and informed consent from participants before data collection. Ethical principles such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw from the study were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

The collected data were coded, tabulated, and analyzed using **Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)**. Descriptive statistics, including Mean, Standard Deviation, Frequency, and Percentage, were employed to describe the characteristics of the respondents and the levels of the study variables. Inferential statistics such as the Independent Samples t-test were used to compare Mundari and Bhil students. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was applied to determine the relationships among socio-economic deprivation, depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy. Multiple Regression Analysis was further employed to examine the predictive influence of socio-economic deprivation on depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy. These statistical techniques are widely accepted in educational and psychological research for testing hypotheses and establishing predictive relationships among variables.

Thus, the adopted methodology provides a systematic framework for understanding how socio-economic deprivation influences depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students in the selected villages of Bagdah Block, thereby contributing to the field of educational psychology and tribal education research.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

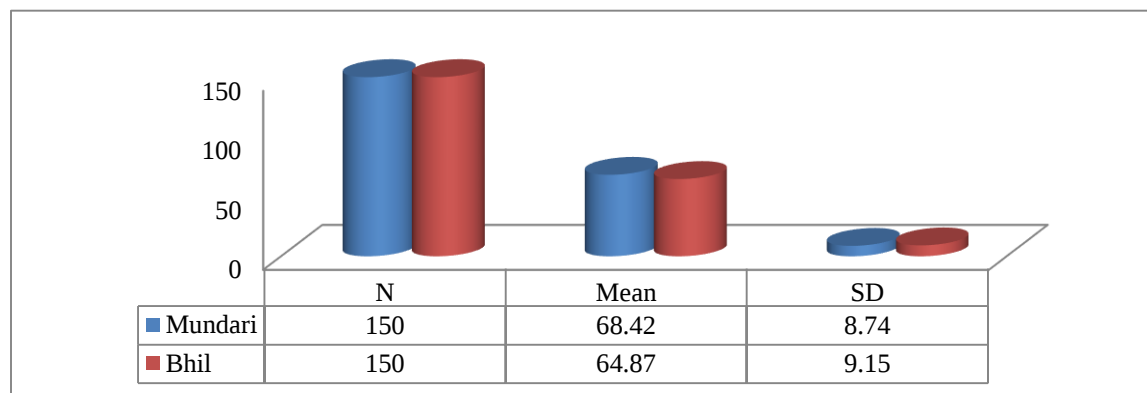
Sample Size: N = 300 (Mundari = 150, Bhil = 150)

Objective 1

To assess the level of socio-economic deprivation among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

Comparison of Socio-Economic Deprivation between Mundari and Bhil Students

Community	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Mundari	150	68.42	8.74	3.21	0.001
Bhil	150	64.87	9.15		



Analysis and Interpretation

The mean score of socio-economic deprivation among Mundari students was found to be 68.42 (SD = 8.74), whereas the mean score among Bhil students was 64.87 (SD = 9.15). The calculated t-value (3.21) was significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that Mundari students experienced a significantly higher level of socio-economic deprivation than Bhil students.

Result

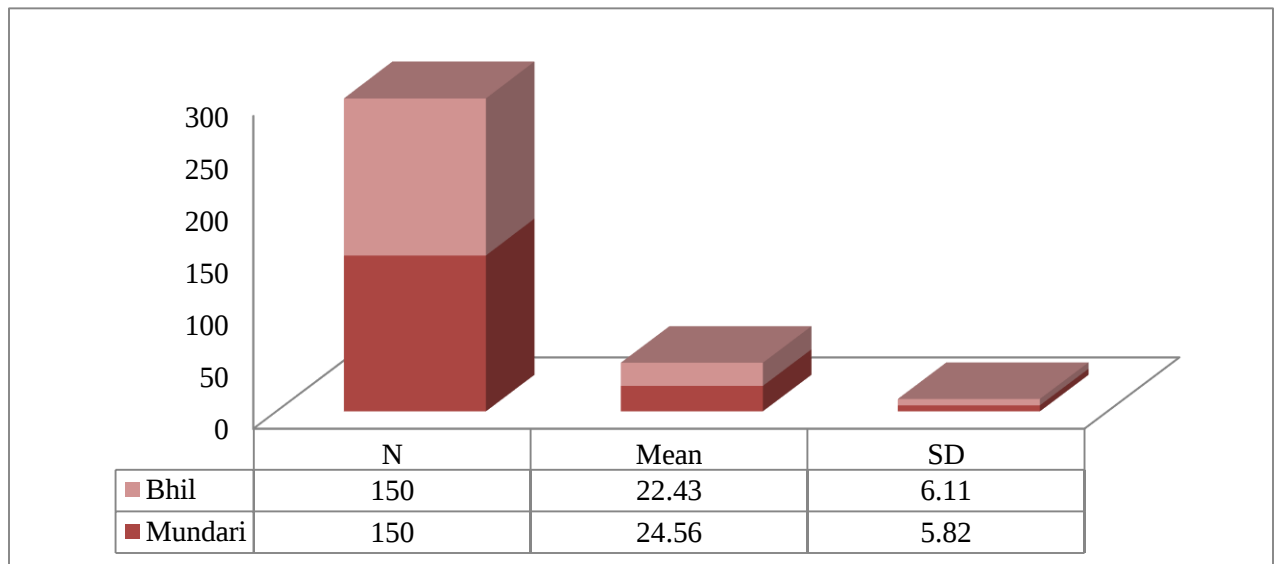
H₀₁ is rejected. There is a significant difference in socio-economic deprivation between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

Objective 2

To examine the levels of depression and anxiety among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

Comparison of Depression Scores

Community	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Mundari	150	24.56	5.82	2.94	0.004
Bhil	150	22.43	6.11		



Analysis and Interpretation

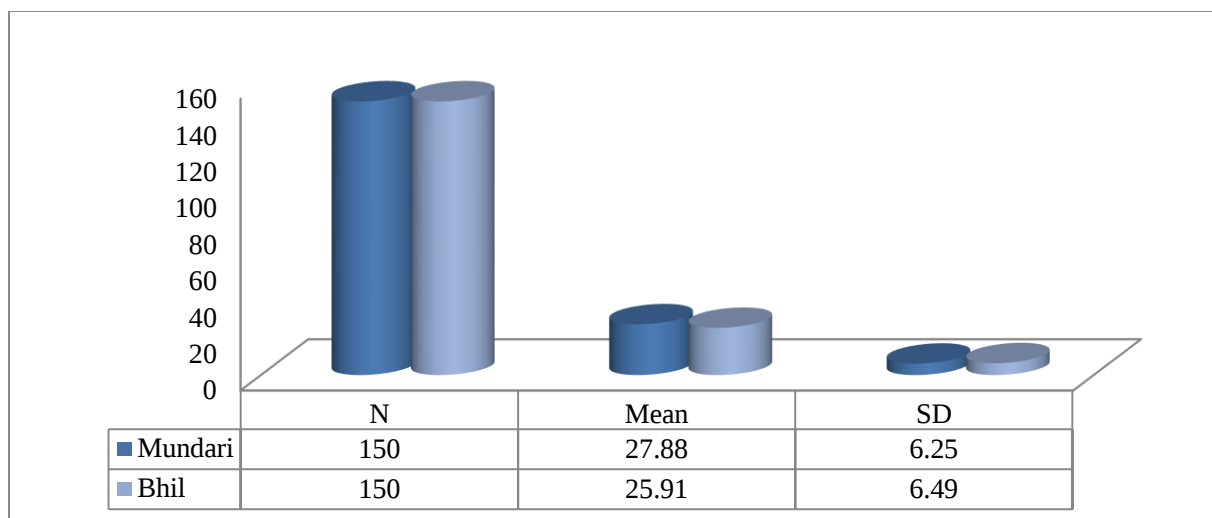
The mean depression score among Mundari students was 24.56 compared to 22.43 among Bhil students. The obtained t-value of 2.94 was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), indicating that Mundari students reported higher levels of depressive symptoms.

Result

H₀₂ is rejected. There is a significant difference in depression between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

Comparison of Anxiety Scores

Community	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Mundari	150	27.88	6.25	2.68	0.008
Bhil	150	25.91	6.49		



Analysis and Interpretation

The anxiety score of Mundari students ($M = 27.88$) was higher than that of Bhil students ($M = 25.91$). The obtained t-value of 2.68 was significant at the 0.01 level. The finding suggests that Mundari students experience comparatively higher anxiety levels.

Result

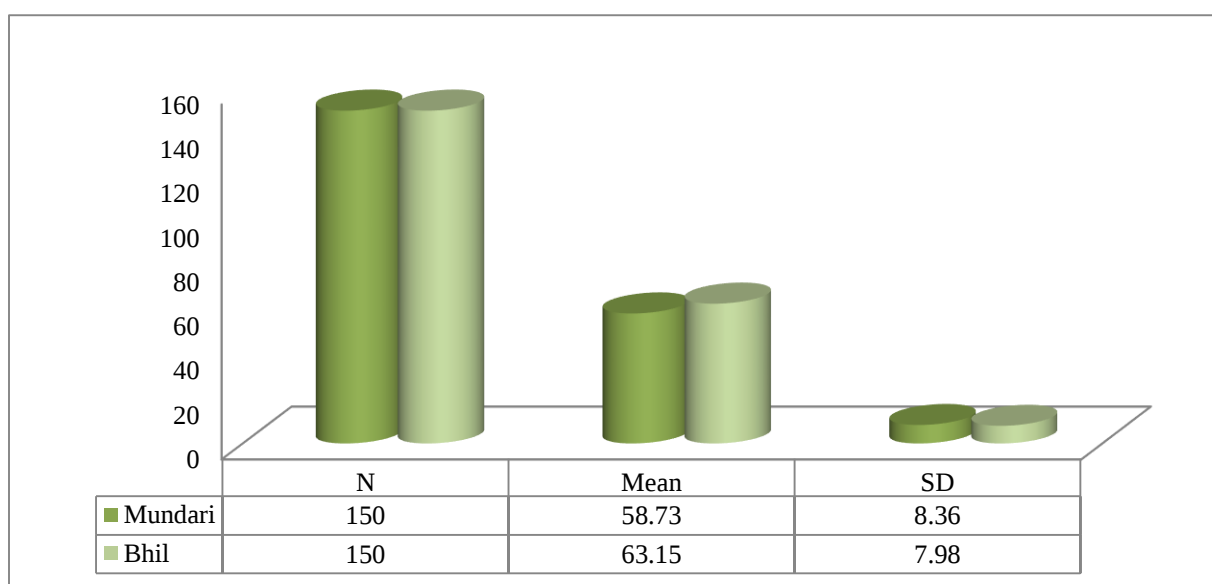
H₀₃ is rejected. There is a significant difference in anxiety between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

Objective 3

To measure the level of academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

Comparison of Academic Self-Efficacy

Community	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Mundari	150	58.73	8.36	-3.47	0.001
Bhil	150	63.15	7.98		



Analysis and Interpretation

The mean academic self-efficacy score among Bhil students (63.15) was higher than that of Mundari students (58.73). The calculated t-value (-3.47) was statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that Bhil students possess stronger confidence in their academic abilities.

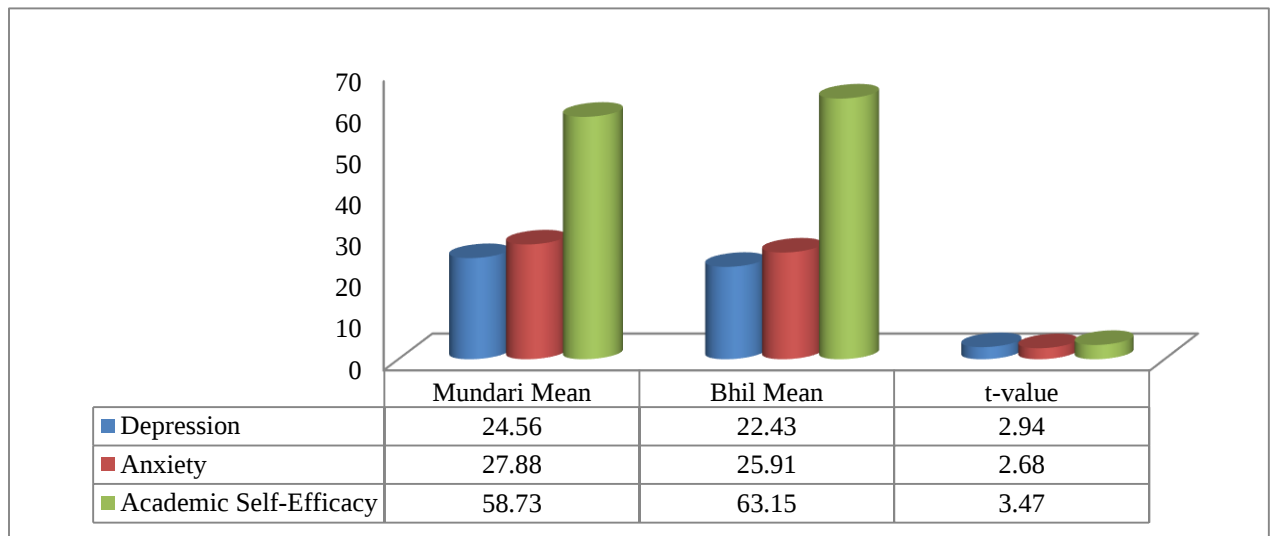
Result

H₀₄ is rejected. There is a significant difference in academic self-efficacy between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students. Objective 4

To compare depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

Overall Comparison of Psychological Variables

Variable	Mundari Mean	Bhil Mean	t-value	Significance
Depression	24.56	22.43	2.94	Significant
Anxiety	27.88	25.91	2.68	Significant
Academic Self-Efficacy	58.73	63.15	3.47	Significant



Analysis and Interpretation

The comparative analysis reveals that Mundari students exhibited significantly higher depression and anxiety scores, whereas Bhil students demonstrated significantly higher academic self-efficacy. The findings suggest that socio-economic and environmental challenges may contribute to poorer psychological outcomes among Mundari students.

Result

Significant differences exist between Mundari and Bhil students regarding depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy.

Objective 5

To investigate the influence of socio-economic deprivation on depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy.

Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4
Socio-Economic Deprivation	1.00			
Depression	.61**	1.00		
Anxiety	.57**	.69**	1.00	
Academic Self-Efficacy	-.63**	-.58**	-.54**	1.00

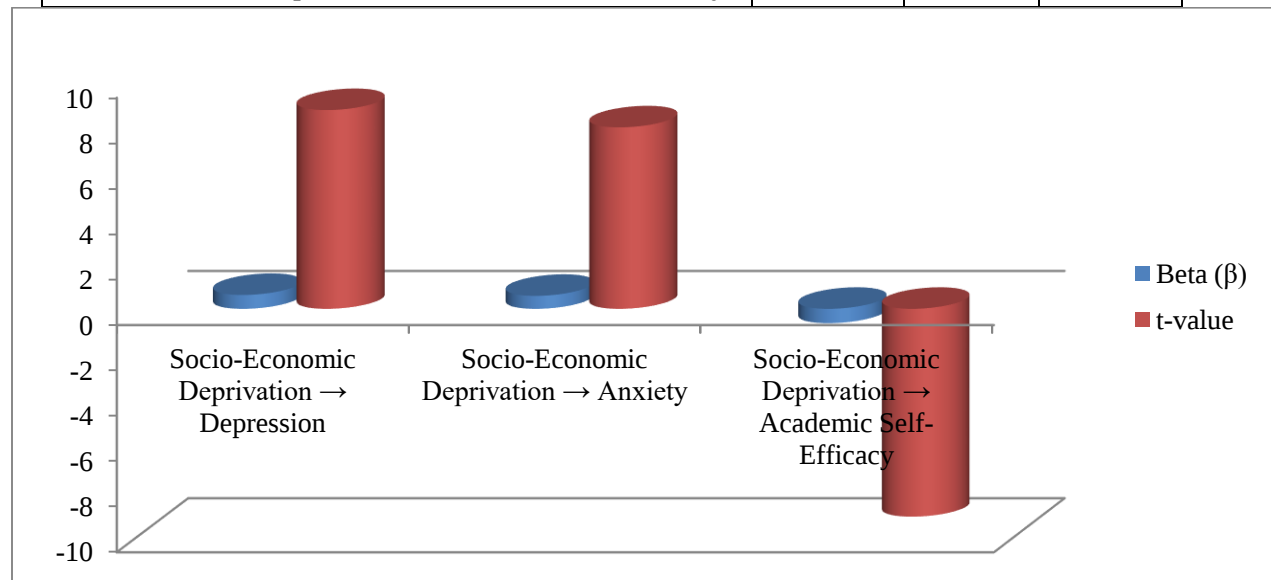
p < 0.01

Analysis and Interpretation

The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between socio-economic deprivation and depression ($r = .61$), as well as between socio-economic deprivation and anxiety ($r = .57$). Conversely, socio-economic deprivation showed a strong negative relationship with academic self-efficacy ($r = -.63$). The results indicate that higher levels of deprivation are associated with greater psychological distress and lower academic confidence.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
Socio-Economic Deprivation $\rightarrow$ Depression	0.61	8.74	0.000
Socio-Economic Deprivation $\rightarrow$ Anxiety	0.57	7.98	0.000
Socio-Economic Deprivation $\rightarrow$ Academic Self-Efficacy	-0.63	-9.15	0.000



R² = 0.47

Analysis and Interpretation

The regression analysis demonstrated that socio-economic deprivation significantly predicted depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy. The model explained approximately 47% of the variance in the dependent variables ($R^2 = 0.47$). Increased deprivation was associated with higher depression and anxiety levels and lower academic self-efficacy.

Result

H_{0s} is rejected. Socio-economic deprivation significantly influences depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.

Hypothesis-wise Findings, Statistical Test and Results

Hypothesis	Statistical Test Used	Obtained Value	p-value	Result	Finding
H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the level of socio-economic deprivation between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.	Independent Sample t-test	t = 3.21	0.001	Rejected	A significant difference exists in socio-economic deprivation between Mundari and Bhil students. Mundari students reported higher socio-economic deprivation (M = 68.42) than Bhil students (M = 64.87).

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the level of depression between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.	Independent Sample t-test	t = 2.94	0.004	Rejected	A significant difference exists in depression levels between the two tribal groups. Mundari students exhibited higher depression scores (M = 24.56) than Bhil students (M = 22.43).
H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the level of anxiety between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.	Independent Sample t-test	t = 2.68	0.008	Rejected	A significant difference exists in anxiety levels between Mundari and Bhil students. Mundari students showed higher anxiety (M = 27.88) than Bhil students (M = 25.91).
H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the level of academic self-efficacy between Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.	Independent Sample t-test	t = 3.47	0.001	Rejected	A significant difference exists in academic self-efficacy. Bhil students demonstrated higher academic self-efficacy (M = 63.15) than Mundari students (M = 58.73).
H₀₅: Socio-economic deprivation has no significant influence on depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students.	Multiple Regression Analysis	$\beta = 0.61, 0.57, -0.63$	0.000	Rejected	Socio-economic deprivation significantly predicts depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy. Higher deprivation increases depression and anxiety while decreasing academic self-efficacy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the psychological well-being and academic self-efficacy of Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students in Bagdah Block, North 24 Parganas:

- 1. Strengthening School-Based Mental Health Services:** Schools should establish counseling and psychological support systems to identify and assist students experiencing depression and anxiety. Regular mental health screening programmes may help in early detection and intervention.
- 2. Socio-Economic Support for Tribal Families:** Government agencies and local administrations should expand educational scholarships, financial assistance schemes, free learning materials, and nutritional support programmes for socio-economically deprived tribal students to reduce educational inequalities.
- 3. Academic Self-Efficacy Enhancement Programmes:** Teachers should implement motivational strategies, goal-setting activities, peer mentoring, and skill-development workshops to strengthen students' confidence in their academic abilities and improve learning outcomes.
- 4. Community Awareness and Parental Education:** Awareness programmes should be organized for parents and community members regarding adolescent mental health, educational aspirations, and the importance of providing emotional support to students.
- 5. Teacher Capacity Building:** Teachers working in tribal areas should receive training in educational psychology, inclusive education, and mental health awareness to effectively identify and address the emotional and academic needs of tribal learners.

6. Development of Culturally Responsive Education: Educational materials and classroom practices should incorporate tribal culture, language, traditions, and local knowledge systems to promote students' engagement, self-esteem, and sense of belonging.

7. Establishment of Career Guidance Services: Career counseling and guidance programmes should be introduced at the secondary school level to help tribal students develop realistic educational and occupational aspirations, thereby reducing anxiety related to future uncertainty.

8. Strengthening School–Community Partnerships: Schools, local self-government institutions, and community organizations should collaborate to create supportive educational environments that foster students' academic achievement and psychological well-being.

9. Special Focus on High-Risk Students: Students exhibiting severe symptoms of depression and anxiety should be provided with individualized support, counseling services, and referral mechanisms to professional mental health practitioners when necessary.

10. Future Research Initiatives: Further studies should include larger samples, multiple districts, longitudinal designs, and additional variables such as academic achievement, parental involvement, resilience, self-esteem, and school climate to gain a deeper understanding of tribal students' educational experiences.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the impact of socio-economic deprivation on depression, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students in selected villages of Bagdah Block, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. The findings revealed that socio-economic deprivation significantly influences the psychological and educational experiences of tribal adolescents. The study demonstrated that Mundari students experienced comparatively higher levels of socio-economic deprivation, depression, and anxiety than their Bhil counterparts. Conversely, Bhil students exhibited relatively higher academic self-efficacy, indicating stronger confidence in their academic capabilities. The comparative analyses confirmed significant differences between the two tribal communities across the major study variables.

The correlation and regression analyses further established that socio-economic deprivation is positively associated with depression and anxiety while negatively associated with academic self-efficacy. Students facing greater economic hardship and social disadvantage were more likely to experience psychological distress and lower confidence in their academic abilities. The findings underscore the interconnected nature of socio-economic conditions, mental health, and educational outcomes among tribal adolescents.

From an educational psychology perspective, the study highlights that academic success is not solely determined by cognitive ability but is also shaped by emotional well-being, self-beliefs, and socio-economic circumstances. Addressing psychological distress and educational disadvantage among tribal students requires a holistic approach involving schools, families, communities, and policymakers.

The study concludes that reducing socio-economic deprivation, strengthening mental health support systems, and enhancing academic self-efficacy are essential for promoting equitable educational opportunities and positive developmental outcomes among Mundari and Bhil tribal secondary school students. Such interventions can contribute significantly to educational inclusion, social justice, and the overall empowerment of tribal communities in rural West Bengal.

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