

**TRIBAL STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
EXPLORING THEIR PEDAGOGICAL, SOCIAL, AND  
COGNITIVE CHALLENGES AND SUPPORTS**

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## **Preface**

This study aims to explore the pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges and supports faced by tribal students in higher education in West Bengal, considering various demographic factors. The thesis is structured into six chapters (Chapters I to VI). Chapter I, entitled "Introduction," presents the theoretical and conceptual background of the study. Chapter II, entitled "Review of Related Literature," analyzes relevant literature and explores research trends. Chapter III, entitled "Problem Statement," includes the study's rationale, knowledge gaps, problem statement, operational definitions of major terms used, research questions, objectives, hypotheses, delimitations, and the conceptual framework of the study. Chapter IV, entitled "Methodology of the Study," includes the research design, variables, population, sample, sampling techniques, data collection tools and techniques, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations adopted for the study. Chapter V, entitled "Analysis and Interpretation of Data," presents the results and their interpretations. Finally, Chapter VI, entitled "Findings and Conclusions," presents the major findings and discussions, educational implications, limitations, and suggestions for further studies. I have tried to explain each topic in detail and included the figures and diagrams for proper data visualisation and illustration of theories and concepts. In this present synopsis, the key points of the entire thesis are mentioned.

## **1.0 Chapter-I: Introduction**

Higher education is a transformative force that significantly impacts individuals, communities, and societies. For tribal students, this journey often entails navigating a complex landscape of challenges and supports that influence their academic success and personal development. Tribal communities in India, comprising over 730 ethnic groups and nearly 8.6% of the country's population (Prajapati, 2023), are among the most marginalized groups due to economic hardship, limited infrastructure, and geographic isolation (Chakraborty, 2019). These communities face unique social, pedagogical, and cognitive challenges in higher education (HE), making equitable access to education an urgent necessity for their socio-economic advancement (Gondane, 2023).

The need for inclusive education is highlighted by the distinct cultural backgrounds, languages, and socioeconomic circumstances that tribal students bring to HE. Challenges such as limited educational resources, cultural dissonance in classroom environments, and low literacy rates often hinder these students' academic performance and engagement (Sarkar, 2023; Munshi & Gajbhiye, 2024). Pedagogical challenges, like a lack of culturally responsive teaching strategies, alongside social challenges stemming from economic disparity and isolation, exacerbate their struggle for equitable educational opportunities (Seaway et al., 2022). Additionally, cognitive obstacles, including language barriers and diverse learning needs, demand adaptive educational approaches to enhance these students' academic achievements and self-confidence (Ou et al., 2022; Vinu, 2021).

The research underscores the necessity of support such as culturally relevant pedagogy, peer collaboration, and targeted institutional resources for fostering success among tribal students in HE (Adhikari & Mohapatra, 2022). These supports not only promote academic engagement but also empower tribal students to contribute to their communities. Addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by tribal students is essential to creating an educational environment that embraces diversity, promotes equality, and builds pathways toward social mobility (Panda & Ojha, 2021).

This chapter explores the pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges faced by tribal students in HE and highlights the importance of culturally responsive supports that address these challenges. It presents theoretical frameworks relevant to understanding these dynamics, providing insights into how educational policies and practices can be shaped to foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment for tribal students. This discussion is critical in realizing the transformative potential of higher education for tribal communities, contributing to both personal empowerment and broader social development.

## 2.0 Chapter-II: Review of Related Literature

This chapter serves as a solid theoretical foundation, providing the researcher with essential knowledge about the findings and methodologies of prior studies. A comprehensive understanding of the theoretical framework, methods, and relevance to the current investigation (Bailey, 2021) is critical for producing valid and reliable study outcomes. This literature review offers a theoretical and conceptual understanding of the pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges and supports encountered by tribal students in higher education. The study incorporates a diverse range of literature to substantiate the research questions and expand knowledge through systematic examination.

### 2.1 Methodology of Literature Review

The researcher employed a systematic literature review approach to gather relevant studies for the present research. This methodology is essential for synthesizing research findings across various studies, offering a comprehensive view of complex issues within the context of tribal students in higher education (Kumar, 2023; Lowe, 2009). Initial searches were conducted using reliable databases such as Google Scholar, ProQuest, Science Direct, Scopus, and Shodhganga. Keywords like ‘pedagogical challenges and supports,’ ‘social challenges,’ ‘cognitive challenges,’ and ‘tribal students in higher education’ guided the literature search. Recently published studies were prioritized, yielding an initial collection of 723 articles, of which 60 were carefully selected for detailed review based on relevance and quality. The literature selection process is illustrated in the table below, demonstrating the systematic approach undertaken for this review.

### 2.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were used in the study:

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1. Studies published between 2011 and 2023.	1. Studies that were not published in English.
2. Studies that focused on tribal students at higher education levels.	2. Studies that had insufficient data.
3. Studies should provide sufficient data on objectives, methodology, and findings.	3. Studies were unrelated to the tribal students in higher education.
	4. Studies for which the full text was unavailable.

### 2.3 Literature Selection Process

The literature screening process is depicted in Figure 2.1. involves systematic steps to refine a large number of literature into a final set of studies for inclusion in research.

Initially, 723 studies were identified through Google Scholar, ProQuest, Science Direct, Scopus, Shodhganga, and PubMed databases. After removing duplicates, 573 studies have remained. These were then screened by title and abstract, reducing the number to 177 studies. Of these, 396 records are excluded for not being relevant to this study. The remaining studies have undergone full-text download, resulting in 80 studies. Further exclusions were made for non-relevance, non-English language and lack of full-text availability. Finally, 60 studies were included in the research. This thorough process ensures that only the most pertinent and high-quality studies are considered.

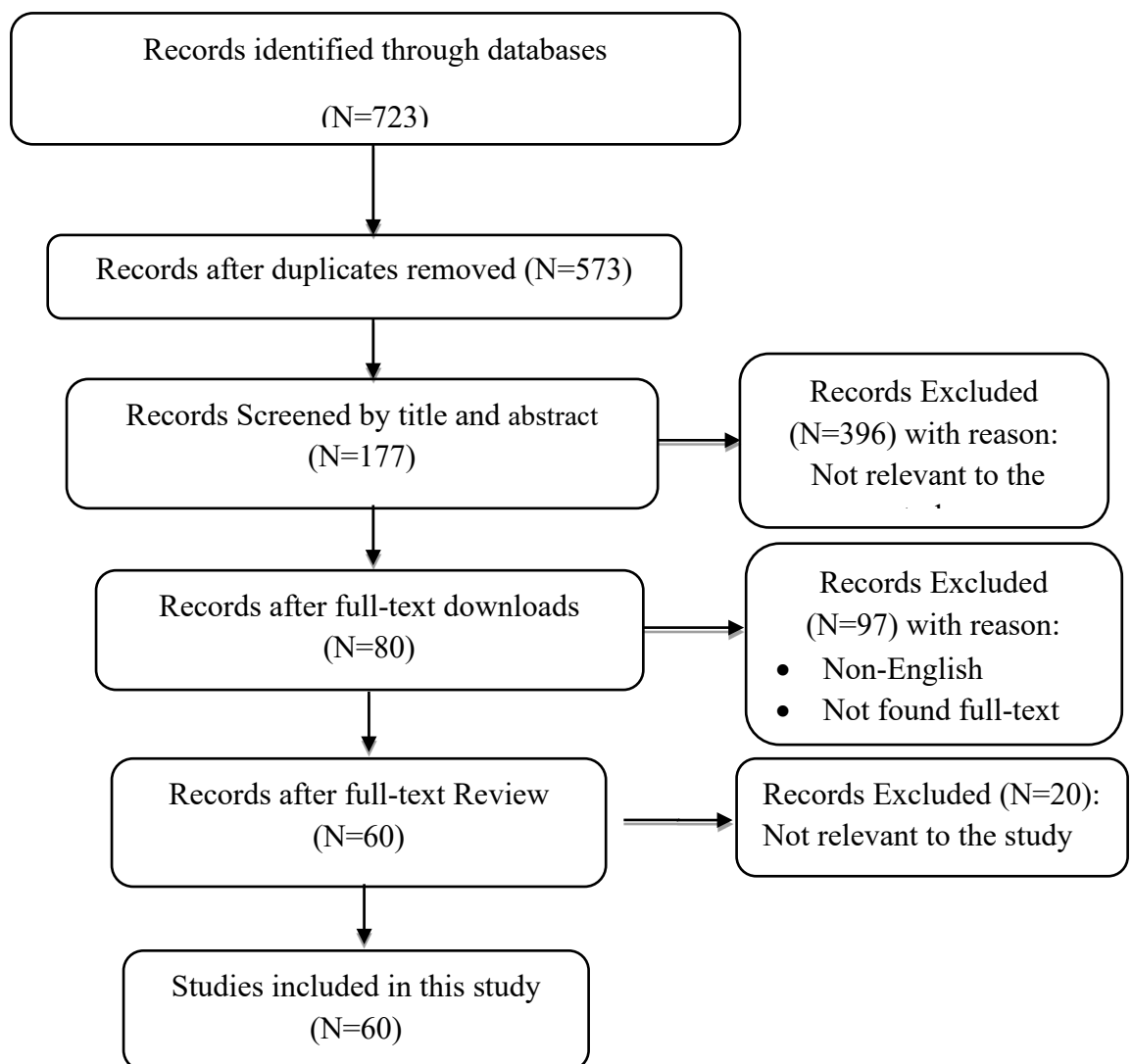


Figure 2.1: Literature Selection Process

### **3.0 Chapter-III: Problem Statement**

The 'Problem Statement' chapter establishes the foundation for this research by defining its purpose and significance. It clearly outlines the researcher's assumptions, background, and positionality, as well as the rationale behind the study. This chapter methodically addresses various elements, including the research problem, operational definitions of key terms, research objectives, and hypotheses, along with the study's delimitations. It also contextualizes the research within the broader field, highlighting gaps in existing knowledge and justifying the need for an investigation into the pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges and supports of tribal students in higher education. This chapter effectively bridges the theoretical framework with the specific methodologies used in subsequent sections, providing a well-rounded understanding of the research problem, its relevance, and the approach taken to explore it.

#### **3.1 Assumptions, Background, and Positionality of the Researcher in the Study**

The researcher belongs to a Santal tribal family. As a member of the tribal community, he has faced many problems throughout his social and academic life. Being a research scholar, he observed and communicated with friends he experienced that tribal students struggled with several challenges or issues at the HE level, such as tribal students are not interested in pursuing HE, having a high dropout rate, gender stereotypes, neglected mainstream society, geographically remote areas, poor socio-economic conditions, several family issues, language barrier, inadequate guidance, lack of parental involvement, lack of encouragement, limited classroom engagement, fear of social integration, poor academic performance, and so on. These challenges give a comprehensive experience and understanding of the tribal community. These things motivated the researcher to explore the challenges and supports they faced throughout their educational careers. These challenges and supports are related to pedagogical, social, and cognitive at the HE level. The researcher chose this study because he wanted to learn more about these issues and prevent them positively. In this connection, the researcher studied educational barriers to higher education for SC and ST students in West Bengal during his post-graduate studies. However, it had some limitations; it was not specific only to ST and was not in-depth. Building on his previous experiences, the researcher aims to conduct in-depth research on this area to understand the issues comprehensively. His ultimate goal is to support tribal teachers, students, parents, community members, and policymakers in enhancing the education and overall well-being of tribal students.

### 3.2 Rationale of the Study

Tribal communities are diverse cultural groups of Indigenous people; they have a long history, distinctive cultures, lifestyles, and geographical isolation from mainstream society (Soren, 2022). These communities often reside in remote and forested areas, maintaining their unique cultural traditions, languages, and customs that distinguish them from the mainstream population (Ravikumar, 2023; Sarkar, 2023; Shamshad, 2024). For this reason, they face multiple challenges ranging from poverty, malnutrition, land alienation, and lack of proper education to cultural mismatches in the education system and limited access to basic facilities, etc. (Kumar, 2024; Rajashekar & Nikhilavathi, 2023; Akkiraju, 2022). Kumar (2024) also reported that household responsibilities, economic hardships, unemployment, indebtedness, and ignorance are prevalent in many tribal areas. These are the general challenges faced by tribal communities in India. In the education context, they face various challenges in their educational journey (Kumbang, 2024). Several studies have discussed the challenges, and few have mentioned how to overcome or support them. For example, cultural mismatches between school and family environments (Sarkar, 2023), gender discrimination, and a lack of proper facilities for girls (Hdyitulah & Aman, 2023) hinder their academic progress. Many studies also explained that tribal students encounter high dropout rates (Primus et al., 2016; Lydster & Murray, 2018), low enrollment, and a lack of support (Chandel et al., 2023). They also face various challenges related to academic performance (Tierney et al., 2018; Chandel et al., 2023), social adjustment (Sarkar, 2023; Baidya & Barik, 2023; Tierney et al., 2018), socioeconomic conditions (Chanana, 1993; Baidya & Barik, 2023; Kishore & Babu, 2023), lack of institutional support (Tierney et al., 2018; Chanana, 1993; Gupta et al., 1985) and Gender-specific issues (Hdyitulah & Aman, 2023; Nair et al., 2016). Despite government initiatives like scholarships and coaching programs, inadequate government support (Chande et al., 2023), they struggle to achieve universal compulsory education for all, especially for Indigenous communities in India (Chaudhari, 2023; Ottaplackal et al., 2022).

Indian tribal students in HE also face several pedagogical challenges related to teaching-learning, institutional environment (Balaji, 2017), curriculum and teaching methods, infrastructure, etc. (Brahmanandam & Bosu, 2015; Baidya & Barik, 2023). Few studies mentioned challenges, such as teacher absenteeism, lack of proficiency in local tribal languages, and insufficient infrastructure, further hindering effective teaching and learning (Raziq & Popat, 2023; Gangele, 2019) and lack of support from parents, teachers, and peers, hindering their educational progress (Tripura, 2020). Additionally, Chandel et al.

(2023) state that high dropout rates, low enrollment, and inadequate support hinder tribal student's educational advancement, while linguistic issues, medium of instruction, and poor educational quality also negatively impact their academic progress (Roy, 2021; Hall et al., 2017).

Overcoming these pedagogical challenges requires specific pedagogical support to bridge the educational gap. These specific supports include incorporating socio-economic conditions and cultural heritage into the curriculum (Gandhi, 2022), where it is crucial to provide skills beyond general literacy to help them face modernisation effectively (Ranjan, 2014). Addressing constraints such as inadequate infrastructure, teacher quality, and access to learning materials is essential (Sarkar, 2023; Chandel et al., 2023). Ottaplackal and Anbu (2022) reported that implementing culturally sensitive curricula, multilingual education, and respecting tribal traditions can prevent pedagogic deterrence and reverse learning. Governmental initiatives like scholarship schemes, hostel facilities, tuition fees, free education, and infrastructure improvements can enhance educational outcomes (Roy & Roy, 2016; Damodaran, 2023). Additionally, community-based learning initiatives incorporating local knowledge and practices can provide valuable support for them (Jessy & Vijayanand, 2023). Integrating Indigenous pedagogies and cultural perspectives into HE can enhance learning experiences and promote the personal growth of tribal students (Paringatai, 2019).

Several studies have discussed the numerous social challenges tribal students face in HE that hinder improving their educational experiences and outcomes. Social challenges stem from historical marginalisation, socio-economic disadvantages, cultural isolation, and lack of access to quality education (Tilak & Choudhury, 2021; Raziq & Popat, 2022). They struggle with social recognition and respect, lack of proper communication facilities, financial crises, poor living conditions, employment, social activities, and educational adjustments (Singh, 2018). Educational issues like limited colleges and universities, inadequate institutional facilities, transportation problems, and few course options hinder access to quality higher education (Ashraf & Anas, 2018). They encounter more significant adjustment challenges to university culture, language constraints, religion, accommodation, present substantial challenges, geographical remoteness, economic conditions, lack of infrastructure, and gender disparities (Sing et al., 2023; Rathore et al., 2018; Akter, 2017; Bramhane, 2023; Daripa, 2017; Sarkar, 2023). Tribal students also face workplace discrimination and abuse and struggle to balance work and household responsibilities, impacting their physical and mental health (Gurikar & Dalawai, 2024).

Tilak and Choudhury (2021) emphasise the growing disparities in higher education participation among tribal students across multiple factors, such as gender, present residence, family structures, medium of instruction and socioeconomic status. Actovin et al. (2023) found significant issues adjusting to institutional culture and maintaining community connections. Parents' education, learning generations, and family income significantly influence social and cultural challenges (Sing et al., 2023; Rathore et al., 2018).

To address these challenges, tribal students need various social supports. Few studies mentioned that teachers' and peers' support within the campus (Walton et al., 2020), financial support, and government assistance, such as scholarships, quota systems, and ICT programs, significantly enhance the participation of tribal learners in HE (Nayak et al., 2020; Ashraf & Anas, 2018; Rathore et al., 2018). The socio-economic conditions, government schemes, reservation policies, inclusive policies, and programs have positively impacted their educational progress (Patra et al., 2021; Daripa, 2017). Bramhane (2023) shows that expanding educational scope, improving monitoring, and increasing coordination are recommended to enhance support for tribal students, especially girls. Community-based learning initiatives incorporating local knowledge and practices can provide valuable support (Jessy & Vijayanand, 2023).

Few studies explored cognitive challenges faced by tribal students in HE that hinder their academic performance and overall well-being (Primus et al., 2016; Kumar & Mohamad, 2023; Dingwall & Cairney, 2023; Lydster & Murray, 2018; Lewis et al., 2010). These challenges include learning, thinking, and problem-solving (Datta and Mete (2022), diverse intellectual abilities, insufficient cognitive engagement, cognitive conflicts, and language barriers (Idowu et al., 2024). These challenges are influenced by various demographic factors, such as gender, learner generation, family issues, parents' educations, academic levels, and institutional issues (Sarkar, 2023; Ramachandran & Reddy, 2022; Walton et al., 2020; Malik, 2020). The cognitive challenges are also exacerbated by high dropout rates, poor educational quality, lack of financial support, and language barriers (Rupavath, 2016; Panda & Ojha, 2021; Vallam, 2022). Additionally, there are significant gender-specific cognitive challenges, with male learners focusing more on self-regulation and self-evaluation, while female students in rural areas face gender discrimination and household duties (Sarkar & Mete, 2022; Hdyitulah & Aman, 2023; Narayanasamy & Vasudevan, 2021).

Few studies have reported on the support systems for overcoming these challenges. For example, metacognitive awareness and learning strategies significantly enhance tribal students' support and achievement (Govindharajan, 2014). Critical cognitive factors include academic assistance, self-directed learning, practical teaching methods (Walton et al., 2020), and friendliness (John & Singh, 2014), reducing cognitive challenges. Various initiatives like mid-day meals, night schools, adult education centres, and curricula in Indigenous languages can provide additional support to tribal students for educational development (Shiva, 2020). Non-formal education interventions have also improved self-confidence, knowledge, and communication skills among tribal students (Konantambigi et al., 2008). Cognitive support through personality traits, emotional intelligence, teacher support, peer collaboration, and effective cognitive strategies further enhance academic outcomes (John & Singh, 2014; Pineda-Báez et al., 2019; Fong et al., 2021). Encouraging student participation through emotional support, bi-directional dialogue, and respect is also essential (Pineda-Báez et al., 2019). Including Indigenous perspectives and cultural resources in the curriculum and teaching methods is vital for effectively addressing these challenges (Álvarez & Valencia, 2023).

Based on the above discussion, along with an extensive literature review and research trend (Chapter II), it is evident that there is an increasing interest in research on the challenges and supports of tribal students in HE. Despite the abundance of research, these fields still need the special attention of researchers. The distribution of research across domains showed that tribal students face various challenges in their higher education. Their educational status, government initiatives, and limited support from institutions, parents, peers, etc., influence their academic performance in HE.

The tribal students face various pedagogical challenges in their institutions that are significantly influenced by demographic factors such as gender, family structure, generation of learners, medium of instruction, parents' educational qualifications, and family income. Various studies on tribal students in HE revealed that they face more pedagogical challenges in their classrooms. While few studies have been conducted on tribal students in HE, no study has separately analysed perceived PC, specifically at undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) levels. Additionally, it has also been identified that several studies have examined different types of residence as a background variable, but no such study investigated ST students from hostel, mess, PG, own house, etc settings. Furthermore, few studies examined parents' educational qualifications as a significant factor influencing PC and PS. However, no study found a separate father's and mother's

educational qualifications to understand their influence on PC and PS. The same scenarios are also observed in social and cognitive challenges and supports. Therefore, in-depth research is needed to explore the complex interplay between demographic factors such as gender, academic level, current residence, family structure, medium of instruction, generation of learners, parents' educational qualifications, family income, and the pedagogical, cognitive, and social challenges and supports. Research on the cognitive challenges and supports tribal students face in HE reveals that demographic factors such as gender and parental education influence their cognitive experiences. Similarly, studies on the social challenges and supports of tribal students indicate that factors like gender, medium of instruction, current residence, and family income impact their social challenges and supports. However, while a few studies have separately measured the impact of demographic factors on pedagogical, social and cognitive challenges and supports among tribal students in HE, no single study has comprehensively examined all of these factors together.

It is observed that though several studies were conducted on pedagogical, social and cognitive challenges and support separately or the relationship between any two of them, no comprehensive study attempt had been taken to explore the relationships among all three variables together, considering the demographic factors as background variables. So, a notable lack of comprehensive research addresses these aspects together. No studies have investigated the impact of overall support on overall, pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges among tribal students in HE. Most studies were conducted in India and abroad, but no such research was found in West Bengal. A critical knowledge gap exists in understanding cultural factors. The researcher wanted to comprehensively study pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges and supports concerning various demographics among tribal students in HE. In light of these recognised research trends and knowledge gaps, the following research questions have emerged for investigation:

1. What are the prevalence rates of pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges and supports among tribal students at the HE level?
2. What are the significant pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges and supports that tribal students face in their HE?
3. How do demographic factors associate with the pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges and supports among tribal students at the HE level?

4. How do pedagogical, social, and cognitive supports independently and collectively effect and predict overall challenges among tribal students in HE?

Therefore, a comprehensive investigation is required to explore the pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges and supports faced by tribal students in higher education in West Bengal while considering various demographic factors to address the concerns mentioned and bridge the information gaps identified in previous studies.

### **3.3 Statement of the Problem**

Based on an extensive literature review, research trends, the researcher's positionality, assumptions, and background of the study, the above rationale, identified research gaps, and research questions, the problem for the present study can be stated as **“Tribal Students in Higher Education: Exploring Their Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Challenges and Supports.”**

### **3.4 Operational Definition of the Major Terms Used**

The operational definitions of the major terms given in the statement of the problem are the following

**Pedagogical Challenges:** Pedagogical Challenges (PC) refer to the difficulties students face in the teaching and learning process, including factors such as academic performance, engagement levels, and perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional methods.

In the present study, PC refers to the pedagogical barriers (PB) that tribal students face in the teaching-learning process, including difficulties in communication with teachers in classroom participation, comprehending the topics, adapting to modern technology-based learning methods, and lack of cultural relevance in the curriculum.

**Pedagogical Supports:** Pedagogical supports (PS) enhance the teaching and learning process, aiming to improve student outcomes and address diverse learning needs.

In the present study, the term PS indicates all the resources, techniques, and interventions teachers provide to enhance student learning and academic success. These supports address students' diverse needs through modifications in teaching strategies, additional learning materials, scaffolding, and promoting an inclusive learning environment. Vital elements of pedagogical support include differentiated instruction, personalised feedback, mentoring, the integration of technology, and opportunities for collaborative learning.

**Social Challenges:** Social Challenges (SC) refer to students' difficulties in interactions and social relationships. These challenges include aspects such as social integration, a sense of belonging, and the impact of cultural factors on their social interactions.

In this study, SC refers to the difficulties or social barriers (SB) tribal students encounter in their interactions and relationships within the educational environment, which can negatively impact their social integration and overall well-being. These challenges lead to feelings of isolation, discrimination, and diminished self-esteem, ultimately impacting the student's ability to thrive in the educational environment.

**Social Supports:** Social supports (SS) are resources and assistance provided to students by teachers, peers, and others in institutions to help them navigate social challenges and improve their social integrity and well-being.

In the present study, SS refers to relationships, resources, and help students get from their peers to overcome difficult times and improve their educational well-being. These resources, which offer practical, emotional, and informational support, can come from peers, teachers, family, and neighbours. Social supports give students a sense of connection and belonging, help them manage stress, and help them become more resilient. Social support in educational settings can include peer cooperation, mentorship, teacher guidance, and family involvement. These strategies help students succeed academically and personally by fostering a supportive environment.

**Cognitive Challenges:** Cognitive challenges (CC) are barriers related to cognitive processes, such as critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, academic performance, comprehension, etc., that influence learning, decision-making, and everyday functioning.

In this study, CC refers to the cognitive barriers (CB) students experience in processing, comprehending, and engaging with educational content and instructional methods due to various factors. CC has two aspects: language challenges (LC) and learning style challenges (LSC). This means that CC refers to the combination of LC and LSC.

**Cognitive Support:** Cognitive support (CS) refers to assistants, strategies, or accommodations designed to assist students in improving their thinking abilities and managing tasks effectively. These strategies aim to help students with cognitive difficulties achieve their goals.

In the present study, CS involves encouragement, positive reinforcement, classroom interactions, and assistance to help students overcome challenges and engage more effectively in learning. CS has two aspects: language support (LS) and learning style support (LSS) have two aspects. These supports may contribute to overcoming cognitive challenges.

**Tribal Students:** Tribals are members of indigenous groups that the Indian Constitution officially recognises as Scheduled Tribes (ST). These tribes, frequently found in isolated locations, represent various ethnic groups with unique social, linguistic, and cultural identities. In this study, tribal students refer to ST students studying at the higher education (Undergraduate and postgraduate level) enrolled in colleges and universities in West Bengal.

**Higher Education:** Higher education (HE) refers to the educational level at which students study after completing secondary school at colleges and universities. It includes undergraduate (UG/Bachelors), postgraduate (PG/Masters) and research (PhD) programs. In this study, tribal students who have completed at least one year of higher education (UG or PG) in general colleges and universities in West Bengal were included.

### **3.5 Objectives of the Study**

The present research was undertaken to meet the following objectives:

- 1.1.To determine the level of overall challenges and support among tribal students in HE.
- 1.2.To assess the prevalence rates of PC, SC, and CC (LSC and LC) among tribal students in HE.
- 1.3.To evaluate the prevalence rates of PS, SS, and CS (LSS and LS) among tribal students in HE.
- 2.1.To compare the overall challenges (OC), PC, SC, and CC (LS and LC) among tribal students in HE regarding gender.
- 2.2.To compare the OC, PC, SC, and CC (LSC and LC) among tribal students in HE across the academic levels.
- 2.3.To explore the influence of family structure on OC, PC, SC, and CC (LSC and LC) among tribal students in HE.
- 2.4.To examine the variation in OC, PC, SC, and CC (LSC and LC) among tribal students in HE across present residence.

- 2.5.To explore the generation of learner influences OC, PC, SC, and CC (LSC and LC) among tribal students in HE.
- 2.6.To compare the OC, PC, SC, and CC (LSC and LC) among tribal students in HE with the medium of instruction.
- 2.7.To explore the influence of parent's educational qualification on OC, PC, SC, and CC (LSC and LC) among tribal students in HE.
- 2.8.To compare the OC, PC, SC, and CC (LSC and LC) among tribal students in HE across family income.
- 3.1.To assess the variations in OS, PS, SS, and CS (LSS and LS) among tribal students in HE across genders.
- 3.2.To compare the OS, PS, SS, and CS (LSS and LS) among tribal students in HE across academic levels.
- 3.3.To explore the influence of family structure on OS, PS, SS, and CS (LSS and LS) among tribal students in HE.
- 3.4.To examine the variation in OS, PS, SS, CS (LSS and LS) among tribal students in HE across present residence.
- 3.5.To explore how a generation of learners influences OS, PS, SS, and CS (LSS and LS) among tribal students in HE.
- 3.6.To compare the OS, PS, SS, and CS (LSS and LS) among tribal students in HE with the medium of instruction.
- 3.7.To explore the influence of parent's educational qualifications on OS, PS, SS, and CS (LSS and LS) among tribal students in HE.
- 3.8.To compare the OS, PS, SS, and CS (LSS and LS) among tribal students in HE across family income.
- 4.1.To explore the association between OC, PC, SC, LSC, LC and OS, PS, SS, LSS, and LS among students in HE.
- 4.2.To assess the effect of OS in explaining the variance in OC among tribal students in HE.
- 4.3.To determine the combined effect of PS, SS, and CS (LSS and LS) in explaining the variance in OC among tribal students in HE.

### **3.6 Hypotheses of the Study**

The following hypotheses were formulated for testing based on research problems and objectives.

- H<sub>01</sub>:** Gender has no significant variations across OC, PC, SC, LC, and LSC among tribal students in HE.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no statistically significant variation in OC, PC, SC, LC, and LSC of tribal HE students in WB across their academic levels.
- H<sub>03</sub>:** Family Structure does not significantly influence the OC, PC, SC, LC, and LSC among tribal students in HE.
- H<sub>04</sub>:** Present residence is not significantly associated with OC, PC, SC, LC, and LSC among tribal students in HE.
- H<sub>05</sub>:** OC, PC, SC, LC, and LSC do not vary significantly across generations of learners among tribal students in HE.
- H<sub>06</sub>:** There is no significant difference in OC, PC, SC, LC, and LSC among tribal students in HE across mediums of instruction.
- H<sub>07</sub>:** OC, PC, SC, LC, and LSC are not significantly associated with tribal students' parents' educational qualifications in HE.
- H<sub>08</sub>:** There is no statistically significant variation in OC, PC, SC, and CC among tribal students in HE across family income.
- H<sub>09</sub>:** There is no significant difference in OS, PS, SS, LSS, and LS among tribal students in HE across genders.
- H<sub>010</sub>:** There is no significant difference in OS, PS, SS, LSS, and LS among tribal students in HE across their academic levels.
- H<sub>011</sub>:** Family structures have not significant influence on OS, PS, SS, LSS, and LS among tribal students in HE.
- H<sub>012</sub>:** There are no significant variations in OS, PS, SS, LSS, and LS among tribal students in HE across their present residence.
- H<sub>013</sub>:** Generations of learners have no significant influence on OS, PS, SS, LSS, and LS among tribal students in HE.
- H<sub>014</sub>:** There is no significant difference in OS, PS, SS, LSS, and LS of tribal students in HE across mediums of instruction.
- H<sub>015</sub>:** Parents' educational qualifications have not significantly influenced OS, PS, SS, LSS, and LS among tribal students in HE.
- H<sub>016</sub>:** There is no statistically significant variation in OS, PS, SS, LSS, and LS among tribal students in HE across family income.
- H<sub>017</sub>:** There is no significant association between OC, PC, SC, LSC, LC and, OS, PS, SS, LSS, and LS among tribal students in HE.
- H<sub>018</sub>:** OS does not significantly explain the variance in OC among tribal students in HE.

**H019:** The combined effect of PS, SS, LS, and LSS does not significantly explain the variance in OC among tribal students in HE.

### **3.7 Delimitations of the Study**

Due to the specific study objectives, time, resources, and other social constraints, the present study is delimited to the following areas:

1. The study is delimited to the state of West Bengal in India.
2. The study is delimited to the higher education level (UG and PG) in colleges and universities.
3. The study is delimited to tribal students (ST), especially those ST students who completed the first year of their UG and PG.
4. The study is delimited to the data collected from 11 Universities and their affiliated colleges in WB, such as Jadavpur University, Calcutta University, Shidhu Kanhu Birsha University, Sadhu Ram Chand University, West Bengal State University, University of Gour Banga, University of North Bengal, Vidyasagar University, Kazi Nazrul University, Raiganj University, and Rabindra Bharati University.
5. The present study included 531 tribal students (ST) in HE as the participants.
6. The study is delimited to focus on three major variables: Pedagogical Challenges and Supports, Social Challenges and Supports, and Cognitive Challenges and Supports (CCS).
7. The primary variables are measured using two self-developed instruments: the “Perceived Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Barriers Scale” (PPSCBS) and “Perceived Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Support Scale” (PPSCSS) are used for data collection.
8. The study is delimited to the nine demographic variables: gender, academic level, family structure, present residence, generation of learners, medium of instruction, father’s educational qualification, mother’s educational qualification, and monthly family income.
9. Data are collected through both online (Google form) and offline modes.

### **3.8 Conceptual Framework**

The researcher created a conceptual framework visually representing the interaction between PC, PS, SC, SS, CC, CS, and demographic factors among tribal students in HE. This framework is based on the theoretical and conceptual perspectives previously described in Chapter I. This is the study's conceptual framework:

**3.9 Independent Variables:** Demographic Factors, PC, SC, and CC.

**3.10 Dependent Variable:** PC, PS, SC, SS, CC, and CS.

**3.11 Theoretical Links:**

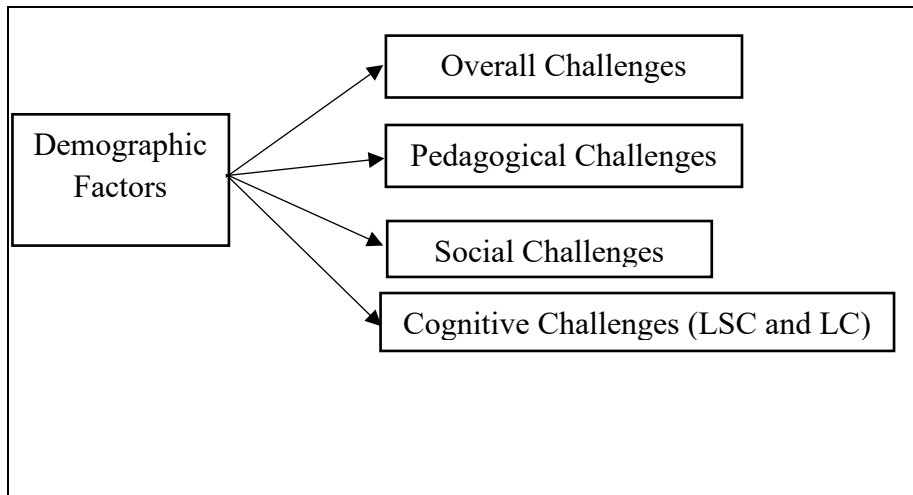
- ***Ladson-Billing's (1995) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy:*** Illustrates teaching methods that recognise and incorporate students' cultural backgrounds, making learning more accessible and meaningful for tribal students.
- ***Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy:*** promotes an interactive classroom environment for tribal students that actively challenges traditional teaching methods to engage in the teaching-learning process.
- ***Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory:*** Although not directly related to this study, it is relevant for designing the learning process. Emphasises learning through experience and reflection, highlighting the importance of active participation in the educational process.
- ***Bandura's Social Learning Theory:*** Examine the cognitive processes in social learning through observation, imitation, and modelling of others' behaviours that influence tribal students' learning outcomes.
- ***Tinto's Social Integration Theory:*** Emphasizes the importance of social relationships, social integration, community engagement, and productive activities in promoting tribal students' well-being and education.
- ***Cultural Mismatch Theory (CMT):*** Explain how first-generation learners of tribal students often come from working-class homes, where the cultural mismatch between family environment and colleges and university environment are common factors that significantly influence their education.
- ***Vygotsky's Constructivist Learning Theory:*** This theory emphasises the sociocultural factors that influence the mental development and education of tribal students; collaborative learning, scaffolding, and reflective thinking are significant support systems for tribal students to enhance meaningful learning outcomes.

**3.12 Hypothesized Relationships:**

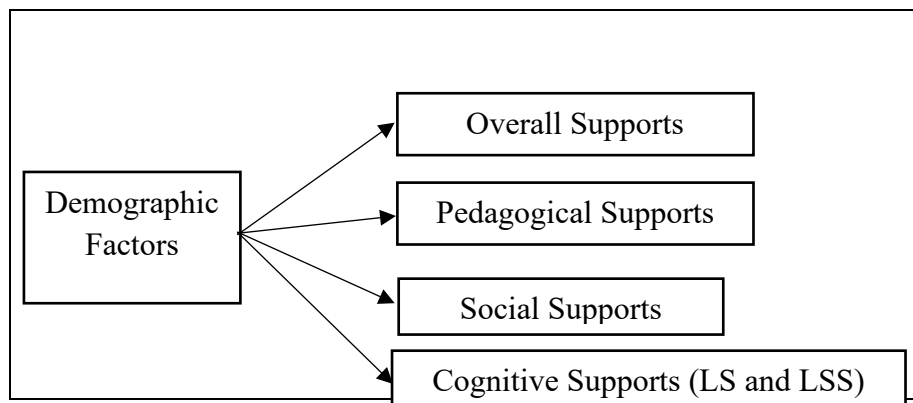
- **Prevalence Rates → PC, SC, CC, PS, SS, and CS:** These are the prevalence rates that explore the significant PC, SC, CC, PS, SS, and CS.
- **Demographic Factors → OC, PC, SC, CC, OS, PS, SS, and CS:** Demographic factors may influence OC, PC, SC, CC, OS, PS, SS, and CS.
- **OS, PS, SS, CS → OC:** OS, PS, SS, CS are hypothesised to influence OS.

### 3.13 Visual Representation:

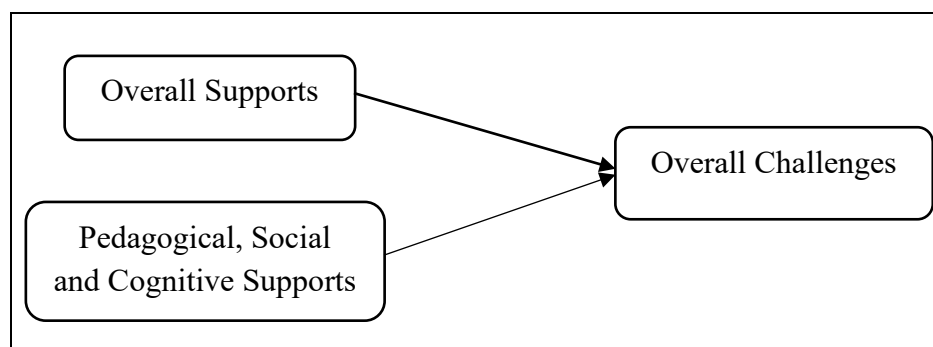
- **Demographic Factors → PC, SC, CC (LSC and LC):**



- **Demographic Factors → PS, SS, CS:**



- **OS, PS, SS, CS → OC**



**Figure 3.1.: Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The researcher applies these conceptual frameworks to methodically examine the intricate relationships between essential variables and theoretical concepts in this study, offering a valuable understanding of the factors that influence the educational outcomes and success of tribal students in HE. The framework provided a structured approach to collecting,

analysing, and interpreting data, which allowed for a thorough comprehension of the investigated topic.

## **4.0 Methodology of the Study**

The study's methodology outlines the study's design, sample selection, data collection tools, and analysis techniques. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey approach was employed, targeting tribal students in higher education across West Bengal. A sample of 531 students was selected using a combination of cluster and random sampling. Data collection involved online and offline methods, using the Perceived Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Barriers Scale (PPSCB) and the Perceived Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Supports Scale (PPSCS). Statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and regression, were conducted to explore relationships among demographic factors, challenges, and supports. Ethical standards, including informed consent and data confidentiality, were rigorously followed to ensure a robust and credible study framework.

### **4.1 Research Design**

This study used a quantitative descriptive survey with a cross-sectional design. The researcher used a quantitative approach to collect and analyse numerical data to examine relationships between variables, test hypotheses, and draw generalizable conclusions (Ghanad, 2023). This method uses structured techniques such as surveys, experiments, and statistical analysis to gather measurable information, aiming for objective, reliable, and replicable results through standardised procedures and large sample sizes. Quantitative research, widely applied in social sciences, natural sciences, and economics, allows researchers to quantify phenomena, identify trends, and make predictions through statistical analysis (Khan et al., 2023). In particular, a cross-sectional survey, a descriptive research design, is used to gather data from a population or representative subset at a specific point in time, providing a snapshot of a population's characteristics, behaviours, or attitudes. This method is cost-effective, time-efficient, and often generalisable to a larger population (Ray, 2015).

### **4.2 Locale of the Study**

The researcher selected West Bengal (WB) as a state of India for his research. WB has a diverse culture and an educationally developed state with several higher education institutions. Among them, the researcher selected 11 universities and their affiliated colleges. The researcher divided these universities into four clusters or regions: North,

South, East, and West. The North region includes the University of North Bengal, the University of Gour Banga, and Raiganj University. The South region includes the University of Calcutta, Jadavpur University, and Rabindra Bharati University. The East region includes West Bengal State University. The West region includes Vidyasagar University, Kazi Nazrul University, Sadhu Ram Chand Murmu University, and Sidhu Kanho Birsha University. These are government-sponsored universities.

### **4.3 Participants of the Study**

#### **4.3.1 Population**

In the present study, the tribal students studying at the HE in WB were the target population. The students from the tribal community are the most backward, disadvantaged, and deprived group in WB. Tribal students comprise about 8.6% of the total population in India (Census of India, 2011). Tribal students constitute 5.8% of the population in WB (Census of India, 2011). The average literacy rate in WB in 2011 was 76.3%, while the literacy rate for Tribal students was 57.9%, indicating an 18.4% gap. The population of this study was UG and PG tribal students who had completed at least one year of their bachelor's or master's degree at HE level at general universities and colleges in WB. However, the total enrollment of tribal students in the 2021-22 academic sessions at the HE level in WB was 95,706 (AISHE 2021-22).

#### **4.3.2 Sample Size Determination**

In survey research, the sample is an essential and representative subset of a broader population. The reliability and trustworthiness of any survey study depend on carefully selecting a suitable representative sample, which was difficult for the researcher. In the present study, the researcher initially determined the sample size before choosing a representative sample. The researcher employed Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula to select the appropriate sample size for the study. This formula is commonly used to determine accurate sample sizes in survey research. The primary objective of this formula is to ensure satisfactory representativeness and impartiality in the study (Ezugu & Akimbo, 2014). According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula, this study has a finite population size of 95,706 (e.g., the total enrolled tribal students in UG and PG at HE level); for this population, the minimum sample size is approximately 383. This sample size is chosen to provide a reliable representation of the larger population, allowing for meaningful insights into the experiences and perspectives of the target group of UG and

PG tribal students at the HE level. The Krejcia and Morgan (1970) formula for sample size determination has been given below.

**The formula for determining sample size**

$$s = \frac{X^2 NP(1-P) + d^2(N-1)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2 P(1-P)}$$

Where,

s = required sample size

$X^2$  = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841)

N = the population size

P = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size)

d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05)

### 4.3.3 Sample Size of the Study

In the present study, the researcher collected 531 data from tribal students in HE who had completed at least their first year of UG or PG degrees. This sample size is standard by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination formula, which suggested that a minimum of 383 representatives. However, the researcher included 531 tribal students in this study.

### 4.3.4 Sampling Procedure

The researcher planned to collect data from all the universities across West Bengal. Due to several constraints, the researcher decided to collect data by dividing all the universities into four clusters: north, south, east, and west. For this reason, the researcher followed the cluster sampling technique. Accordingly, the researcher distributed the survey among the participants in each cluster.

In this study, the researcher employed a simple random lottery method to select universities after classifying clusters. There are 18 state universities in West Bengal considered for the lottery sampling, including 1. Aliah University, 2. University of Burdwan, 3. University Of Calcutta, 4. Jadavpur University, 5. University Of Gour Banga, 6. University Of Kalyani, 7. University Of North Bengal, 8. Netaji Subash Open University, 9. Presidency University, 10. Rabindra Bharati University, 11. Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, 12. Sidhu Kanho Birsha University, 13. West Bengal State University, 14. Vidyasagar University, 15. Visva-Bharati University, 16. Kazi Nazrul University, 17. Raiganj University 18. Sadhu Ram Chand Murmu University.

The researcher randomly selected 11 universities to collect data for this. These universities are the University of Calcutta, Jadavpur University, University of Gour Banga, University of North Bengal, Rabindra Bharati University, Sidhu Kanho Birsha University, West Bengal State University, Sadhu Ram Chand Murmu University, Vidyasagar University, Kazi Nazrul University, and Raiganj University.

After that, the researcher purposively collected data from the participants studying in the selected 11 universities and their affiliated colleges. Here, the researcher collected 531 data from tribal students at HE in WB who had completed at least their first year of UG or PG degrees. The researcher then applied snowball sampling to reach the targeted participants and collect more data for the study. It is challenging for a single person to collect all the data alone, so the researcher gets help from his friends using two modes/ways such as offline and online.

**Offline (Physical) mode:** In this study, the researcher employed purposive sampling to collect data from tribal students. The researcher personally visited the universities and their colleges and hostels to communicate with tribal students and gather data from them. Only HE students who had completed at least one year and belonged to the tribal category were selected for the study.

**Online Mode:** The researcher used snowball sampling for online data collection. Information was gathered by sharing Google Form links across various platforms, including WhatsApp, Facebook, and LinkedIn groups. This method enabled the researcher to reach a wider audience.

**Table No. 4.1: Online and Offline Mode of Data Collected**

Data Collection Mode	Sample (N)	Percentage (%)
online Mode	149	28.06%
Offline (physical) Mode	392	73.81%
Total	531	100%

**Table No. 4.2: Sample Distribution of the Study**

SN	Variables	Classification	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender	Male	275	51.8%
		Female	256	48.2%
2.	Academic Level	UG	336	63.3
		PG	195	36.7

SN	Variables	Classification	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
3.	Family Structure	Joint	330	62.1%
		Nuclear	163	30.7%
		Broken	38	7.2%
4.	Present Residence	Government Sponsored Hostels	299	56.3%
		Own House	134	25.2%
		Mess/PG/Relatives/House/Others	98	18.5%
5.	Generation of Learner	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation Learner	155	29.2%
		2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation Learner	305	57.4%
		3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Generation Learner	71	13.4%
6.	Mode of Instruction	Only Bengali	226	42.6%
		Only English	70	13.2%
		Bi-lingual	219	41.2%
		Tri-lingual	16	3.0%
7.	Father's Educational Qualification	Illiterate	67	12.6%
		Primary (i-v)	61	11.5%
		Upper Primary (vi-viii)	78	14.7%
		Secondary (ix-x)	138	26.0%
		Higher Secondary (xi-xii)	114	21.5%
		Graduate/ Postgraduate/ Others	73	13.7%
8.	Mother's Educational Qualification	Illiterate	141	26.6%
		Primary (i-v)	96	18.1%
		Upper Primary (vi-viii)	125	23.5%

SN	Variables	Classification	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
		Secondary (ix-x)	104	19.6%
		Higher Secondary (xi-xii)	48	9.0%
		Graduate/ Postgraduate/ Others	17	3.2%
9.	Family Income	Up to 6174	299	56.3%
		6175-18496	111	20.9%
		18497-30830	44	8.3%
		30831-46128	30	5.6%
		46129-61662	21	4.0%
		61663 and above	26	4.9%

#### 4.4 Description of the Variables

A variable is a measurable characteristic or attribute of research participants that can change or differ between individuals over time. According to Peecher & Solomon (2001), a variable is a quantifiable, observable, or manipulable characteristic, attribute, or component examined in the research. However, the researcher considered several variables in this study, which fall into three main categories: sociodemographic or independent, dependent, and Both (independent and dependent) variables. The study provides a detailed description of these variables below.

##### 4.4.1 Demographic Variables (Independent Variables)

In the present study, demographic variables are treated as independent variables, which can influence dependent variables. The researcher manipulates and measures the independent variables to determine how they relate to an observed event (dependent variables). A detailed explanation of these variables is given below.

1. **Gender:** Gender is an independent variable influencing the dependent variables. It has been categorised into two groups: Male and Female.

2. **Family Structure:** This independent variable was categorised and measured up to three labels: Joint, Nuclear, and Broken (separated, divorced, single parent). This classification was formulated based on Indian societal norms.
3. **Present Residence:** This variable denotes the student's current residence, specifying where they reside at the time of the study. It is categorised into three groups: Hostel, Own House, and Others (Relative's House, Mess, Rent House, Paying Guest).
4. **Academic Level:** This variable is an independent variable that also influences the dependent variables. It has been categorised into Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG).
5. **Generation of Learner:** This variable is considered an independent variable and is classified into three categories: first-generation, Second-Generation, and third- and fourth-generation.
6. **Medium of Instruction:** This variable is included as an independent variable and classified into four categories: Only Bengali, Only English, Bi-lingual, and Tri-lingual.
7. **Parent's Educational Qualification**
  - **Father's Educational Qualification:** Father's educational qualification is an independent variable and categorised into six labels: illiterate, primary (grades I-V), upper primary (grades VI-VIII), secondary (grades IX-X), higher secondary (grades XI-XII), higher education (UG/PG/other).
  - **Mother's Educational Qualification:** This variable is an independent variable that also influences the dependent variables. It has been categorised into six groups: illiterate, primary (grades I-V), upper primary (grades VI-VIII), secondary (grades IX-X), higher secondary (grades XI-XII), and higher education (UG/PG/other).
8. **Family Income:** Family income (monthly), as an independent variable, is divided into seven categories: Up to 6,174, 6,175-18,496, 18,497-30,830, 30,831-46,128, 46,129-61,662, 61,663-123,321, and Above 1,23,322

#### 4.4.2. Measured Variables (Dependent Variables)

Quantitative values, such as physical attributes like weight and height, represent measured or dependent variables. The measured variables are often referred to as outcome variables based on their role in the research. In the present study, overall challenges (OC), pedagogical challenges (PC), social challenges (SC), cognitive challenges (CC), overall supports (OS), pedagogical supports (PS), social supports (SS), and cognitive supports (CS) are considered as the dependent variables. A detailed description of the dependent variables has been given below.

1. **Overall Challenges:** In the present study, overall challenges are treated as a dependent variable (at the time of the mean difference test) and are continuous.
2. **Pedagogical Challenges:** In the present study, pedagogical challenges are called barriers. This variable was treated as a dependent variable (at the time of the mean difference test). It was continuous.
3. **Social Challenges:** This variable is called social challenges faced by the social experiences of tribal students in HE. It was continuous and treated as a dependent variable (at the time of the mean difference test).
4. **Cognitive Challenges:** The present study treats cognitive challenges as a dependent variable. This variable was continuous and divided into two categories: Language Challenges and Learning Style Challenges.

#### **4.4.3 Both (Independent and Dependent) Variables**

In the present study, Overall Support (OS), pedagogical support (PS), social support (SS), and cognitive support (CS) serve as independent and dependent variables. In the regression analysis, they are treated as independent variables, and they are considered dependent variables during the testing of mean differences. Details of these variables are given below.

1. **Overall Supports:** In the present study, this variable is treated as an independent variable when analysing its effects on OC. At the same time, it is treated as a dependent variable when testing mean differences concerning demographic variables.
2. **Pedagogical Supports:** In the present study, this variable is treated as an independent variable when analysing its effects on OC during regression analysis. At the same time, pedagogical support is treated as a dependent variable when testing means differences concerning various demographic variables.
3. **Cognitive Supports:** In the present study, Cognitive Support (CS) is treated as an independent variable when analysing its effects on OC during regression analysis. Additionally, Cognitive support is treated as a dependent variable when testing mean differences concerning various demographic variables.
4. **Social Supports:** In the present study, this variable is treated as an independent variable (at the time of regression analysis) and the dependent variable (at the time of testing mean differences). This variable is continuous.

#### **4.5 Methods of Data Collection**

To get pertinent data from the chosen participants, the researcher employed four instruments: a consent letter, a demographic profile sheet, and two questionnaires designed

to assess challenges and support. Every participant was instructed to provide their responses for each item of the instruments. A comprehensive description of each instrument is provided below.

#### **4.5.1. Informed Consent**

The researcher provided a consent letter to inform participants about the research title, the investigator and supervisor, research purposes, research background, descriptions of tools, target participants, brief instructions, the confidentiality of responses, and asking for voluntary participation in the study and provide relevant data for the study.

#### **4.5.2. Demographic Profile of the Participant**

The demographic profile sheet collected participants' personal, social, and educational information, comprising 15 items. These items were as follows- 1. Name, 2. Gender (Male/Female/Others), 3. Age, 4. Family Structure (Joint/Nuclear/Broken), 5. Place of staying at present (Own House/Relative House/Mess/Hostel/Paying guest / Others), 6. Permanent Address, 7. Name of the Present Institution, 8. Course (UG/PG/Other), 9. Generation of Learning (1/2/3/4), 10. Language used for classroom instruction/ teaching (Bengali/English/Hindi/Bilingual/Tri-lingual), 11. Language Known, 12. Name of the Previous Institution, 13. Father's Educational Qualification (Illiterate/Primary/Upper Primary/Secondary/Higher Secondary/Graduation/Post Graduation/Others), 14. Mother's Educational Qualification (Illiterate/Primary/Upper Primary/Secondary/Higher Secondary/Graduation/Post Graduation/Others), 15. Monthly Family Income (Up to 6,174/6,175-18,496/18,497-30,830/30,831-46,128/46,129-61,662/61,663-123,321/Above 1,23,322).

#### **4.5.3 Perceived Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Barriers Scale (PPSCB Scale)**

This Perceived Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Barriers Scale (PPSCB) scale is self-developed and constructed by Dr. L.L. Mohakud, A. Kisku, and S. Khan (2023). This five-point Likert scale consists of 19 items divided into three dimensions: (I) Pedagogical Barriers (PB) (5 items), (II) Social Barriers (SB) (4 items), and (III) Cognitive Barriers (CB) (10 items). The cognitive barriers have two sub-dimensions: Language Barriers (LB) and Learning Style Barriers (LSB). Every item has five choices: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The scoring procedure of the scale was straightforward with five choices; a score of 5 was assigned for Strongly Agree, 4 was assigned for Agree, 3 was assigned for Neutral, 2 was assigned for Disagree, and 1 was assigned for Strongly Disagree. The scale takes 30 to 40 minutes to respond to all the items.

The high scores on the scale indicate high challenges/barriers and vice-versa. However, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the PPSCB scale was 0.933, and the Split-half reliability coefficient was 0.953. Experts' opinions and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) ensured the scale's validity and usability.

**Table No. 4.3 The Dimensions and their Respective Items and the Scoring Procedure for the PPSCB Scale**

Dimensions of the PPSCB Scale				
Sl. No.	Dimensions of the Scale		Item Number	Items
I	Pedagogical Barriers (PB)		1, 2, 3, 4, 5	5
II	Social Barriers (SB)		6, 7, 8, 9	4
III	Cognitive Barriers (CB)	Language Barriers (LB)	10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	6
		Learning Style Barriers (LSB)	16, 17, 18, 19	4
Total items				19
Scoring Process				
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

#### **4.5.4 Perceived Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Supports Scale (PPSCS Scale)**

The researcher also employed the "Perceived Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Supports Scale" (PPSCS) in the current study. This self-developed scale was constructed by Dr. L.L. Mohakud, A. Kisku, and S. Khan (2023). This five-point Likert scale comprises 15 items designed to measure supports across multiple dimensions within educational settings. This scale has three dimensions: (I) Pedagogical Supports (PS) consists of 5 Items, (II) Social Supports (SS) consists of 4 items, and (III) Cognitive Supports (CS) consists of 6 Items, divided into two sub-scale: Language Supports (LS) and Learning Style Supports (LSS). Participants are asked to respond to each item with five choices: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The scoring procedure of the scale: 1 was assigned for Strongly Agree, 2 was assigned for Agree, 3 was assigned for Neutral, 4 was assigned for Disagree, and 5 was assigned for Strongly Disagree. The scale takes 15 to 20 minutes to respond to all the items. The low scores on the scale indicate high support or low challenge and vice-versa. However, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the PPSCS scale was 0.873, and the Split-half reliability coefficient was 0.826. Experts' opinions and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) ensured the scale's validity and usability.

**Table No. 4.4 The Dimensions and their Respective Items and the Scoring Procedure for the PPSCS Scale**

Dimensions of the PPSCS Scale				
Sl. No.	Dimensions of the Scale		Item Number	Items
I	Pedagogical Supports (PS)		1,7,8,9,14	5
II	Social Supports (SS)		2,4,5,6	4
III	Cognitive Supports (CS)	Language Supports (LS)	11,15	2
		Learning Style Supports (LSS)	3,10,12,13	4
Total items				15
Scoring Process				
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

## 4.6 Data Collection Procedure

The data for this study are collected using two methods: offline and online. The researcher gets approval from the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) and the research supervisor's data collection bonafide and official authorisation letters. The data collection period is extended from April 26, 2023, to July 27, 2023.

### 4.6.1 Online Data Collection Method

The researcher created a Google form to collect information from the participants. These Google forms are shared with various online platforms or social media, including WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc, and request the participants to participate in the study. The researcher also contacts the known participants to participate in the research and sends the link to the Google form. The researcher requested that they share the link with their known participants to participate in the study. Participants were also encouraged to share the link with their peers. Data were collected using this method from April 26, 2023, to July 27, 2023.

### 4.6.2 Face-to-Face (Offline) Mode of Data Collection

In this offline method, the researcher personally visited various universities, colleges, and hostels to communicate with tribal students and gather data from them. Initially, he explained the research topic and purpose, inviting them to participate voluntarily. The questionnaires are then distributed, requesting that participants carefully read each item, respond accordingly, and return the completed forms.

## **4.7 Storage and Protection of Data**

### **4.7.1 Data Screening**

After completing the survey, participants' responses are examined to ensure full completion. Screening criteria included collecting completed consent, demographic information, and questionnaire items. Data is mined and cleaned before being integrated into a single MS Excel file and securely saved on the researcher's computer.

### **4.7.2 Tabulation of Data**

The data are systematically organised and tabulated for further analysis and interpretation to meet the study's objectives. The raw data collected from 531 higher education tribal students are individually entered into an Excel sheet.

## **4.8 Data Analysis Techniques**

The researcher used his PC to access the securely stored Excel spreadsheet while performing the statistical analysis. He also used SPSS-20 software to analyse the data with his supervisor.

### **4.8.1 Outliers**

First, the researcher assessed data normality by using Skewness and Kurtosis statistics. Using SPSS, the interquartile ranges are identified with Tukey's hinges output values to examine and review outliers. Boxplots are created to find data values outside the +1.5 and -1.5 interquartile ranges (beyond the third and first quartiles, respectively) and extreme outliers outside the +3 and -3 interquartile ranges. Any outliers are removed in the final analysis and findings report.

### **4.8.2 Descriptive Data Analyses**

The demographic variables of the study are described using primary descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency, percentage analysis, mean, and standard deviation. Specific descriptive analyses included demographic variables such as gender, family structure, present residence, academic level, learner generation, medium of instruction, parent's educational qualification, and family income. Additionally, the prevalence rate of pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges and supports among tribal students are provided in Chapter V.

### **4.8.3 Parametric Analysis**

Parametric statistics is used to test hypotheses and draw conclusions. It combines descriptive and inferential statistics. In this study, the researcher used parametric statistics because the data are normally distributed, as indicated by Skewness, Kurtosis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, and Shapiro-Wilk test results (provided in Chapter V), and the sample size is large. This study applied parametric statistical techniques such as a t-test, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Pearson correlation, and regression in SPSS-20. An independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA test the significant mean difference in the dependent variables among tribal students concerning their demographic variables. Pearson Correlation analysis explored the relationship between OC, PC, SC, LC, LSC, OS, PS, SS, LS and LSS of tribal students in HE. Regression analyses are also performed to explore the effects of OS, PS, SS, LS, and LSS on OC among tribal students in HE. These parametric analyses collectively contribute to testing the research hypotheses.

### **4.8.4 Parametric Assumptions**

The normality of the data is evaluated by examining the skewness and kurtosis statistics, which are used to assess the parametric assumptions. The outliers are also examined. The acceptable range for skewness is  $\pm 2$ , and kurtosis is  $\pm 7$ , as Bryne (2010) and Curran et al. (1996) stated. Similarly, Kline (2005) examined the range of variance for Skewness and Kurtosis, allowing for values between -3 and +3 for Skewness and between -10 and +10 for Kurtosis. Subsequently, data normality is evaluated using the Shapiro-Wilk test, anticipating that it would not produce any significant outcomes, hence allowing for the assumption of normality. After completion of the normality tests, a Q-Q plot is generated to represent the observed and predicted values. A practical normality test should exhibit values that are linearly aligned. A histogram and a box-and-whisker plot can be used to identify and analyse any outliers to assess the homogeneity of the variance. Each hypothesis is tested at a significance level of 0.05.

## **4.9 Tools Used for Report Writings**

The researcher also utilised MS Word 2021 to compose the study report (thesis). In addition, he utilised various AI tools such as Chat-GPT-3.5 produced by OpenAI, SciSpace, Quillbot, Grammarly, Consensus AI, etc., to improve linguistic proficiency, grammatical mistakes, summarise, rephrase, rewrite the content, generate appropriate citations, and eliminate grammatical errors, AI detector, and plagiarism.

## **4.10 Assumptions, Limitations, and Ethical Considerations**

The study's validity has been communicated by discussing the assumptions, limits, and ethical considerations. This includes input mistakes, data precision, and any other possible challenges and pertinent information necessary for directing future research endeavours. Statistical assumptions regarding correlation analysis and normal distribution have been made in specific sections of this study, particularly in the sections that discuss correlation and statistical procedures.

### **4.10.1 Assumptions**

The study is based on the assumption that participants would truthfully and accurately respond to the survey, correctly identifying themselves as tribal students at the HE level. Furthermore, it was anticipated that this integrity and precision would safeguard participants' confidential data, including their demographic information and survey answers.

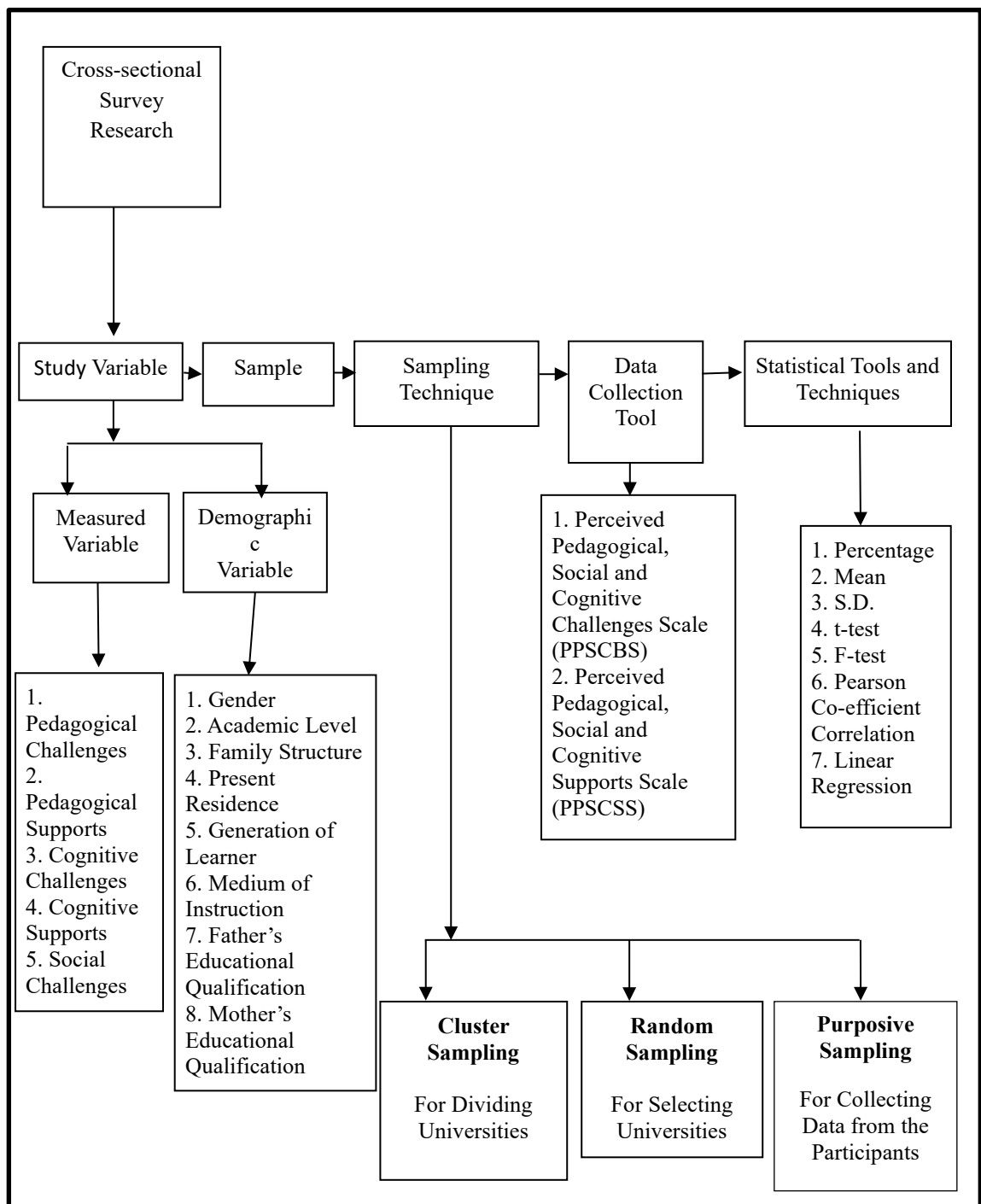
### **4.10.2 Limitations**

This study exclusively relied on self-reported replies from participants, assuming the veracity and objectivity of these reports. In addition, the study participants were approached exclusively, perhaps restricting the amount of data acquired.

### **4.10.3 Ethical Considerations**

During this survey investigation, ethical rules were rigorously maintained. The study sought to augment our comprehension of the associations between variables without asserting causation. The correlational study began after receiving approval from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) to guarantee adherence to ethical standards. Throughout all interactions with potential volunteers, the investigator consistently delivered explicit and thorough information regarding the study's objectives and subject matter, guaranteeing the absence of any coercion or undue influence in our communications. Before the research commenced, informed permission forms were administered, and participants' signatures were gathered according to the guidelines established by Jadavpur University, the Research Advisory Committee (RAC), and the broader scientific community. The rules of confidentiality and anonymity were strictly upheld, and no identifiable information was gathered that would need disclosure. Furthermore, during the study, much attention was given to ensuring precise data input, improving its overall validity, and making it more suitable for making well-informed assertions.

#### 4.11 Design of the Study



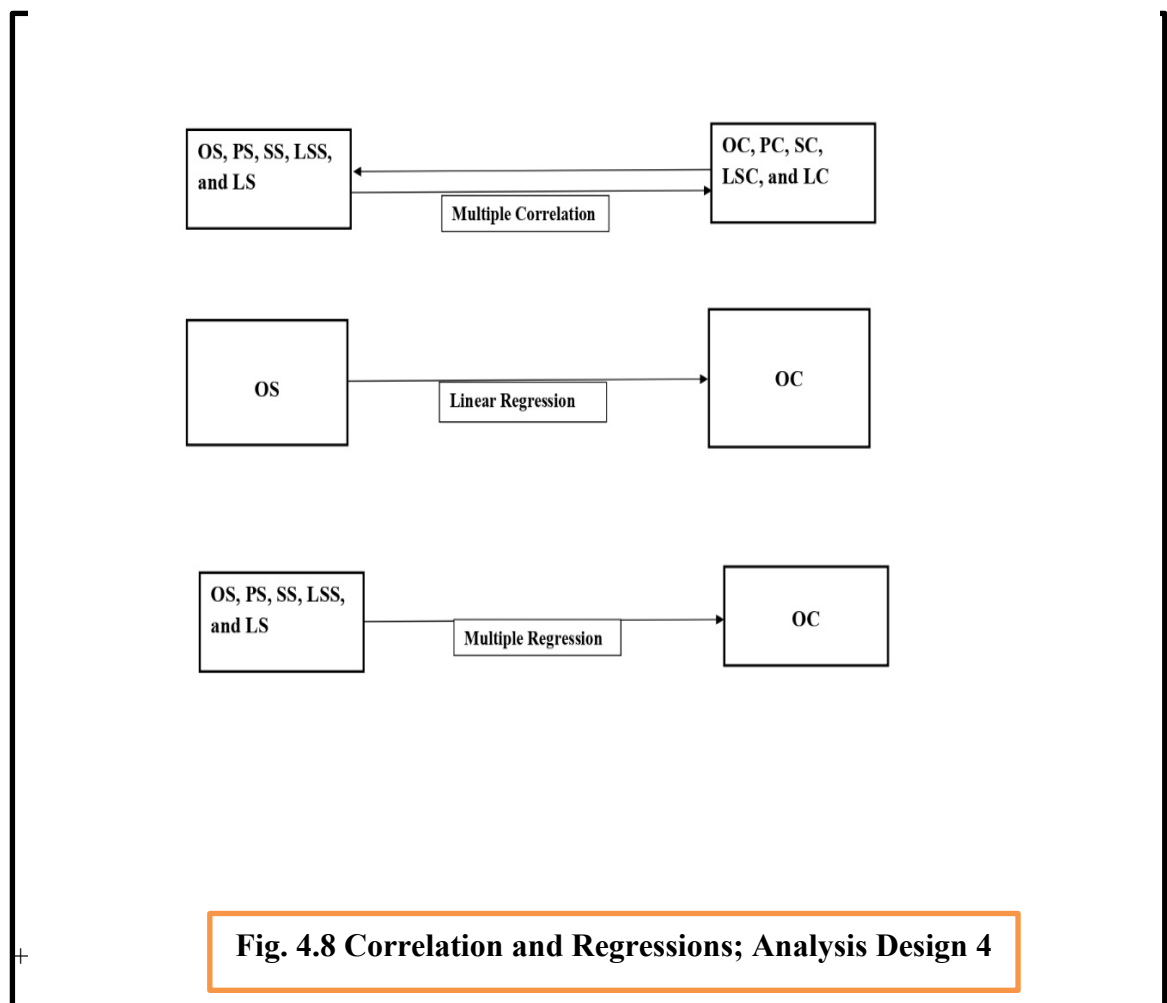
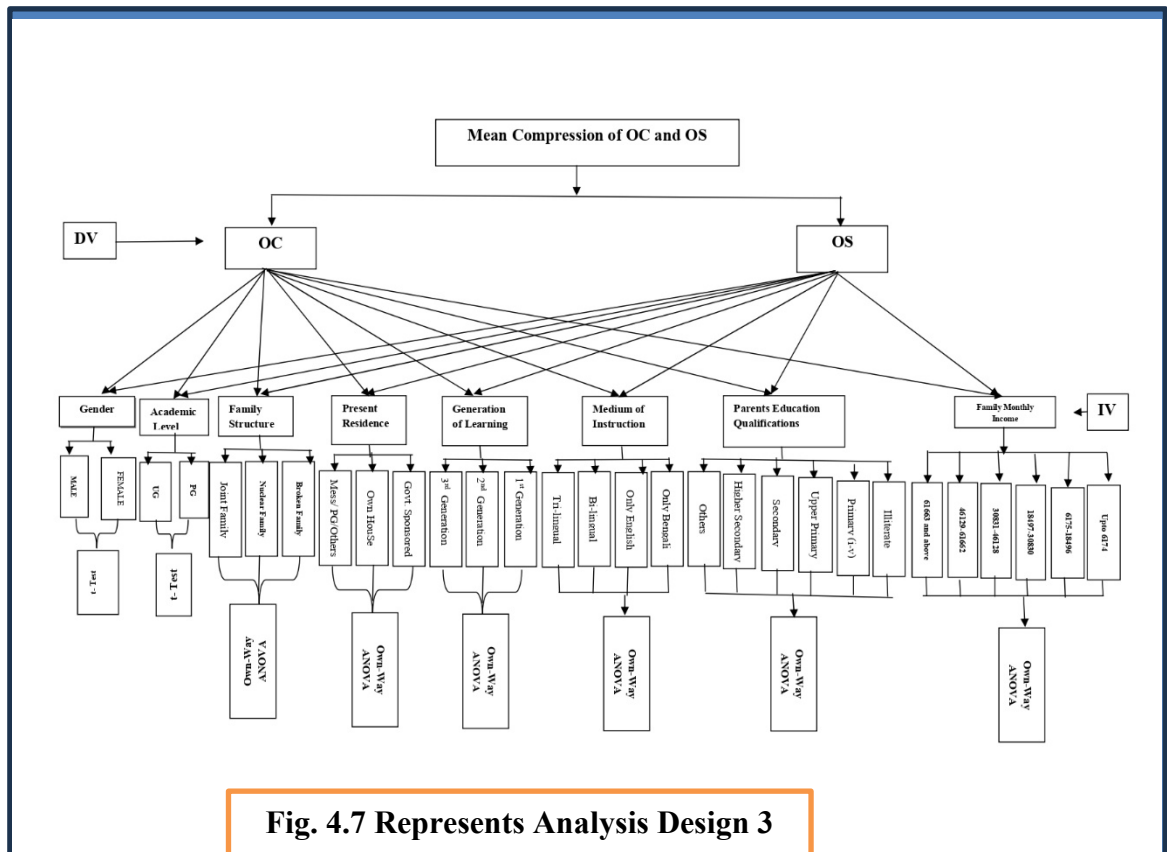
**Fig 4.4: Design of the Study**

```

graph TD
    A[Prevalence of Challenges or Barriers and Supports] --> B[OC]
    A --> C[OS]
    D[TYPE OF LEVELS] --> B
    E["SUB- SCALES  
[Very Low (VL), Low (L),  
Moderate (M), High (H),  
and Very High (VH)]"] --> B
    F[Percentage] --> B
    B --> G1[VL]
    B --> G2[L]
    B --> G3[M]
    B --> G4[H]
    B --> G5[VH]
    G1 --> H1[%]
    G2 --> H2[%]
    G3 --> H3[%]
    G4 --> H4[%]
    G5 --> H5[%]
    C --> I1[VL]
    C --> I2[L]
    C --> I3[M]
    C --> I4[H]
    C --> I5[VH]
    I1 --> J1[%]
    I2 --> J2[%]
    I3 --> J3[%]
    I4 --> J4[%]
    I5 --> J5[%]
  
```

The flowchart illustrates the analysis design for the prevalence of challenges or barriers and supports. It starts with a central box labeled "Prevalence of Challenges or Barriers and Supports". This box branches into two main categories: "OC" (Challenges or Barriers) and "OS" (Supports). Each category further branches into five sub-scales: "VL" (Very Low), "L" (Low), "M" (Moderate), "H" (High), and "VH" (Very High). Each sub-scale then branches into a "Percentage" box. A separate box labeled "TYPE OF LEVELS" points to the "OC" category, and a box labeled "SUB- SCALES [Very Low (VL), Low (L), Moderate (M), High (H), and Very High (VH)]" points to the sub-scales under "OC". A box labeled "Percentage" points to the percentage boxes under "OC".





## **5.0 Chapter-V: Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

This chapter covers data analysis, interpretation, and presentation, employing statistical techniques to thoroughly examine the data collected. It serves as the backbone of the study, as data analysis and interpretation are essential for deriving meaningful research findings. Without this section, the research would be incomplete.

### **5.1 Analysis and Interpretations**

#### **5.1.1 Data Normality**

Before advancing to descriptive statistics and hypothesis testing, the researcher conducted Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests to assess data normality. Additionally, Skewness (Sk) and Kurtosis (Ku) were calculated to confirm the distribution characteristics for pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges and supports among tribal students in higher education.

## **6.0 Chapter-VI: Major Findings and Conclusion**

The researcher reached the conclusive phase by examining and interpreting data from the previous chapter. This chapter concisely overviews the investigation's final or concluding elements. We have ensured that we have included all the essential aspects of the conclusion with great attention and caution. Otherwise, the research's practicality would be diminished, resulting in a loss of appeal. The content elements in this chapter are organised into five main categories: the study's significant findings, discussion and conclusion of the results, implications of the study, limitations, and suggestions for further study.

### **6.1 Major Findings of the Study**

As per the analysis and interpretations, the following findings were drawn.

#### **6.1.1. Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Challenges among Tribal Students in HE**

##### ***Pedagogical Challenges***

1. Most tribal students struggle with open communication with their teachers.
2. Most tribal students feel discomfort in responding to teachers' questions.
3. Most tribal students experience discomfort with modern technology-based learning methods.
4. Most tribal students experience difficulties understanding lesson content due to the lack of examples connected to their cultural background.

5. Tribal students experience hesitation in participating in class group discussions.
6. Most tribal students were experiencing difficulty understanding classroom topics.

### ***Social Challenges***

1. Most tribal students do not report facing unpleasant behaviour from their classmates.
2. Some tribal students experience being outsiders due to their heritage within their educational institutions.
3. Most tribal student's perceptions of stereotypes about academic ability are based on community.
4. Some tribal students struggle with language Challenges affecting classroom participation; a substantial group does not face this challenge.

### ***Cognitive Challenges***

#### ***Language Challenges***

1. Most tribal students struggle with pronunciation and are mocked by classmates. A substantial group does not face this challenge.
2. Most tribal students struggle to understand English lectures and instructions.
3. Most tribal students are uncomfortable with non-native language instruction.
4. Most tribal students experienced difficulty understanding study materials due to linguistic challenges.

#### ***Learning Style Challenges***

1. Most tribal students experience difficulty focusing on picture presentations.
2. Most tribal students dislike completing classroom worksheets.
3. Many tribal students feel uncomfortable with hands-on classroom activities; a substantial group does not experience this kind of discomfort.
4. Tribal students are not experiencing difficulties in concentrating on overhead projector lessons.
5. While many tribal students struggle to follow lessons taught through gestures, a substantial group does not face this challenge.

## **6.1.2 Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Supports among Tribal Students in HE**

### ***Pedagogical Supports***

1. Most tribal students do not feel supported by their classmates when completing research or project work.
2. Most tribal students do not get teacher support in their academic challenges.
3. Teachers do not engage in tribal students' academic development.
4. Most tribal students do not get the necessary remedial classes to support their academic improvement.
5. Most tribal students feel their institution does not encourage peer learning and collaboration.

### ***Social Supports***

1. Most tribal students do not feel encouraged by their teachers to do good work, indicating a lack of positive reinforcement from teachers.
2. Most tribal students lack emotional support from their teachers during distress.
3. Most tribal students feel their classmates do not value their opinions.
4. Most tribal students do not have a good relationship with their teachers.

### ***Language Support***

1. Most tribal students do not feel the teacher's encouragement for open classroom communication.
2. Most tribal students do not feel the teacher's encouragement for language proficiency development.

### ***Learning Style Support***

1. Many tribal students do not feel encouraged and motivated by their peers when they accomplish something.
2. Most tribal students feel their teachers do not encourage them to think analytically.
3. Most tribal students do not find classroom interaction helpful in deeply understanding content.
4. Most tribal students feel their organisations do not help them build confidence and self-presentation skills.

### **6.1.3 Overall, Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Challenges Influence by Demographics among Tribal Students in HE**

#### ***Overall Challenges***

1. OC among tribal students show no significant differences based on gender.
2. OC among tribal students do not significantly differ based on academic level.
3. OC among tribal students differ significantly across different family structures.
4. A significant difference in OC among tribal students concerning their present residence.
5. OC among tribal students vary significantly according to their generation of learners.
6. The medium of instruction significantly differed in OC among tribal students.
7. OC among tribal students vary significantly depending on their father's educational qualifications.
8. OC among tribal students vary significantly based on their mother's educational qualifications.
9. OC among tribal students is significantly different based on their familial monthly income.

#### ***Pedagogical Challenges***

1. PC among tribal students does not differ significantly by gender.
2. There are no significant variations in PC among tribal students related to their academic level.
3. Significant variations in PC are noted based on family structure.
4. There is a significant difference in PC among tribal students concerning their present residence.
5. There is no significant difference in PC among tribal students regarding their generation of learners.
6. Significant differences in PC among tribal students are observed based on the medium of instruction.
7. PC among tribal students shows a statistically significant difference related to their father's educational qualifications.
8. PC among tribal students shows a statistically significant difference concerning their mother's educational qualifications.
9. Significant differences in PC are observed when considering familial monthly income.

### ***Social Challenges***

1. There are no notable differences in SC among tribal students concerning their gender.
2. SC among tribal students shows significant differences based on academic level.
3. Family structure shows a significant influence on SC among tribal students.
4. SC among tribal students shows a significant difference concerning their present residence.
5. SC among tribal students have not significant differences across generations of learners.
6. SC among tribal students varies significantly concerning the medium of instruction.
7. Statistically significant differences are observed in SC among tribal students concerning their father's educational qualifications.
8. Significant differences in SC among tribal students are related to their mother's educational qualifications.
9. SC among tribal students varies significantly according to familial monthly income.

### ***Language Challenges***

1. There are no significant variations in LC among tribal students across genders.
2. There are no significant variations in LC among tribal students across the academic levels.
3. A statistically significant difference in LC is observed concerning family structure.
4. Significant differences in LC are found among tribal students concerning their present residence.
5. LC among tribal students differs significantly based on their generation of learners.
6. There are significant differences in LC among tribal students based on the medium of instruction.
7. LC among tribal students differs significantly based on their father's educational qualifications.
8. LC among tribal students does not differ significantly based on their mother's educational qualifications.

9. LC among tribal students differs significantly concerning familial monthly income.

### ***Learning Style Challenges***

1. LSC does not vary significantly among tribal students based on gender.
2. Significant differences in LSC are observed among tribal students based on their academic level.
3. Differences in LSC are significant when considering family structure.
4. LSC among tribal students exhibits a significant difference based on present residence.
5. A significant difference in LSC is noted among tribal students related to their generation of learners.
6. LSC among tribal students demonstrates a statistically significant difference concerning the medium of instruction.
7. LSC among tribal students exhibits a statistically significant difference in their father's educational qualifications.
8. LSC among tribal students shows a statistically significant difference concerning their mother's educational qualifications.
9. No significant difference in LSC is noted when considering familial monthly income.

### **6.1.4 Overall, Pedagogical, Social, Learning Style, and Language Supports Influenced by Demographics among Tribal Students in HE**

#### ***Overall Support***

1. No significant differences were found in OS among tribal HE students based on gender.
2. A significant difference existed in OS among tribal HE students based on their academic level.
3. Family Structure did not differ significantly in overall support among tribal HE students.
4. The present residence significantly influences OS among tribal HE students.
5. Significant differences in OS in generation learners among tribal HE students.
6. A significant difference existed in the OS among tribal HE students based on their medium of instruction.

7. There was a significant difference in the OS among tribal HE students based on their father's educational qualifications.
8. The results revealed a significant difference in OS among tribal HE students based on their mothers' educational qualifications.
9. No significant difference existed in OS based on their family monthly income among tribal HE students.

### ***Pedagogical Support***

1. No significant differences were found in PS among tribal HE students based on gender.
2. PS significantly differed among HE tribal students based on their course or academic level.
3. There were no significant differences in PS among tribal HE Students regarding their family structure.
4. A statistically significant difference was observed in PS among tribal HE students concerning their present residence.
5. Pedagogical supports varied significantly across generations of learners among tribal HE students in WB.
6. Significant differences were found in the pedagogical support of tribal HE students in WB across mediums of instruction.
7. Father's educational qualifications significantly varied in PS among tribal HE students.
8. Significant differences were observed in PS among tribal HE students based on their mother's educational qualifications.
9. No significant differences in PS based on their family monthly income among tribal HE students.

### ***Social Support***

1. No significant differences existed in SS among tribal students based on gender.
2. No significant differences in SS among tribal HE students based on their academic level.
3. No significant results were found in SS among tribal HE students based on their family structure.
4. A significant difference was observed in SS among tribal HE students concerning their present residence.

5. A significant difference was found in SS among tribal HE students regarding their generation of learning.
6. No significant differences were observed in the SS among tribal HE students concerning their medium of instruction.
7. Social support was significantly associated with fathers' educational Qualifications of tribal HE students.
8. A significant difference was found in SS based on their mothers' educational qualifications among tribal HE students.
9. No significant differences in SS based on their family monthly income among tribal HE students.

### ***Language Support***

1. No significant differences were found in LS among tribal HE students based on gender.
2. Based on Tribal HE students' academic level, significant differences were found in LS.
3. No significant result was found in LS among tribal HE students based on their family structure.
4. A significant difference was observed in LS among tribal HE students regarding their present residence.
5. A significant difference existed in LS among tribal HE students regarding their generation of learning.
6. No significant differences were found in the LS among tribal HE students concerning their medium of instruction.
7. Language support was not significantly associated with fathers' educational qualifications of tribal HE students.
8. Mothers' educational qualifications significantly differed with LS among tribal students.
9. There were no significant differences in LS based on their family monthly income among tribal HE students.

### ***Learning Style Support***

1. No significant differences were found in LSS among tribal HE students based on gender.
2. Significant differences existed in LSS among tribal HE students based on their academic level.

3. There were no significant differences between tribal HE students and their family structure.
4. The present residence significantly influences LSS among tribal HE students.
5. A significant difference was observed in LSS among tribal HE students regarding their generation of learning.
6. Significant differences were observed in the LSS of tribal HE students concerning their medium of instruction.
7. The LSS showed a statistically significant difference among tribal HE students regarding their fathers' educational qualifications.
8. A significant difference was observed in LSS based on their mothers' educational qualifications among tribal students in HE.
9. There were no significant differences in LSS based on their family monthly income among tribal students in HE.

#### **6.1.5 Relationship between OS, PS, SS, LS, and LSS with OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among Tribal Students in HE**

1. There is a low negative but significant correlation between OS and OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among tribal students in higher education.
2. A low negative but significant correlation is found between PS and OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among tribal students in higher education.
3. A low negative but significant correlation exists between SS and OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among tribal students in higher education.
4. LSS has a low negative but significant correlation with OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among tribal students in higher education.
5. LS shows no significant correlation with OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among tribal students in HE.

#### **6.1.6 Effect of OS, PS, SS, LSS, and LS on OC among Tribal students in HE.**

1. OS significantly predicts OC among tribal students in HE, with OS as a negative predictor of OC.
2. LS, PS, and LSS combined significantly predict OC among tribal students in HE, with LSS being the most potential predictor.

## 6.2 Discussion of the Major Findings

### *Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Challenges of Tribal Students in HE*

While the pedagogical challenges tribal students face in HE are a concern, the study findings revealed that most tribal students struggle with open communication with their teachers. This finding is supported by Duță (2015) and Dobransky et al. (2004) but contrasted by García-Martínez et al. (2021). This finding indicated that effective communication with teachers is crucial for academic progress and support of tribal students in HE (Gay, 2002). Another notable finding revealed that most tribal students feel uncomfortable responding to teachers' questions. This finding is supported by Mebarkia et al. (2016) and Moll and González (1994) but contradicted by Batistis et al. (2024) and Doğan and Yucel-Toy (2021). This finding suggests that adopting more interactive, student-centred teaching methods could help build students' confidence and engagement. The study findings revealed that most tribal students experience discomfort with modern technology-based learning methods. This finding is supported by Bhatt (2022) and Saranya and Deepa (2023) but contradicted by Muresan and Gogu (2014) and Kanungo (2020). This finding indicates that the digital divide may exist among tribal students in HE due to limited access to technology or insufficient training (Yoo et al., 2021). This finding suggests that online learning platforms and technology-based learning methods are a one-stop solution for tribal students who face challenges accessing technology and school resources. The study findings revealed that most tribal students experience difficulties understanding lesson content due to the lack of examples connected to their cultural background. Gillispie (2021), Gay (2002), and Watherston (2019) support this finding. This finding suggests that culturally relevant content can improve the engagement and success of tribal students to bridge the cultural gap. Furthermore, the study findings revealed that tribal students experience hesitation in participating in group discussions. This finding is supported by Ramteke (2018) but contradicted by Chung (2021). This finding suggests that educators should encourage participation in collaborative learning (Jones, 1999; Norton, 2008; Miranda et al., 2021). Additionally, the study findings revealed that most tribal students are experiencing difficulty understanding classroom topics. Malcolm (1999) and Mukherjee (2009) supported this finding. This challenge is due to various factors, including language challenges, teaching methods and insufficient prior educational preparation (Abramova et al., 2020; Jorden & Walton, 1987), a fundamental barrier to academic success. This finding suggests the need for culturally

responsive teaching that can improve the success of ethnically diverse students (Gay, 2002).

The study found that most tribal students do not report facing unpleasant behaviour from their classmates. Irvine (1968) supports this finding but contradicts Shelly (2017). This finding suggests that the social environment in educational institutions should be hostile and collaborative, allowing students to concentrate on their academic progress (Pluut et al., 2015). The study found that some tribal students experience being outsiders due to their heritage within their educational institutions. Morgan et al. (2023) and Actovin et al. (2023) support this finding, which is contrasted by Kottler (2015). This finding suggests that institutions should foster a more inclusive environment that recognises and values the diverse cultural backgrounds of all students (Jabbar & Mirza, 2019). Furthermore, the study findings revealed that most tribal students' perception of stereotypes about academic ability is based on community. This finding is supported by Bick et al. (2022) and Fries-Britt and Griffin (2007) but contradicted by Warne and Larsen (2024). This finding suggests that educational institutions should combat stereotypes by implementing awareness campaigns and mentorship programs and highlighting the academic achievements of tribal students. The study findings revealed that some tribal students struggle with language challenges that affect classroom participation. This finding is supported by Pattanaik (2020) and Mackenzie (2009). It is contrasted by Liu (2023). This finding suggests that institutions should provide specific language support services, such as tutoring, language workshops, and materials in multiple languages or dialects that tribal students are familiar with.

The findings of challenges related to language and learning style experienced by tribal students in HE identifies significant areas of struggle and specific areas where challenges are less prominent. Most tribal students face significant language challenges, such as struggling with pronunciation, being uncomfortable with non-native language instruction, and difficulty understanding study materials. These findings are consistent with research by Mackenzie (2009), Usma et al. (2018), Wilches et al. (2018), Alexander et al. (2022). These challenges are due to limited pronunciation and proficiency practices and inadequate support (Zetlin et al., 2011), negatively affecting students' confidence and participation in HE (Haryadi & Aprianoto, 2020). Language proficiency significantly predicts tribal students' academic, social, and psychological adjustment, partially mediated by acculturation stress and social support (Lashari et al., 2022). The findings underscore the necessity for enhanced empathy and institutional assistance to mitigate detrimental

behaviours such as peer ridicule, which can erode the confidence of tribal students (Felizardo et al., 2017). An encouraging, non-judgmental educational atmosphere helps mitigate language-related difficulties and foster inclusivity. Implementing language assistance programs, including tutoring and language laboratories, would improve students' understanding and academic achievement. Furthermore, supplying accessible study materials or translation services helps mitigate linguistic obstacles, enhancing students' engagement with course content and academic achievement.

The findings revealed that most tribal students face significant learning style challenges in HE, including difficulty focusing on picture presentations, dislike of the conventional classroom worksheets, discomfort with hands-on classroom activities, difficulty concentrating on overhead projector lessons, and struggle to follow lessons taught through gestures. This finding is supported by the studies of Pintó and Ametller (2002) and Essex-Lopresti (1979) but contradicted by Murray's study (1979). They struggle with these challenges due to various graphical characteristics, non-native language, cultural differentiation, disciplinary concepts, and differences in visual processing (Pintó and Ametller (2002). Smith et al. (2007) reported that conventional education practices and assessment techniques could not work for tribal communities (Smith et al., 2007). Worksheets frequently have language and cultural requirements that may not be compatible with the experiences of students from native communities (Bánhegyi & Nagy, 2019). This finding suggested that teachers should look into more engaging and culturally appropriate assessment techniques, including project-based learning or oral presentations, which can more accurately represent students' knowledge and skills (Singh et al., 2019). Essex-Lopresti (1979) reported that Overhead projectors provide clear transparency for lectures, and they can substitute or augment blackboards, offering a pristine and extensive surface area while enabling educators to face their audience (Murray, 1979). However, Saitz (1966) reported that gestures and linguistic patterns can be more enjoyable for tribal students and effective pedagogically for teachers. Montiegel, K. (2022) reported that teachers' gestures contribute to the classroom goal of socialisation into oral communication despite being nonverbal resources in a setting that prioritises spoken language. This finding suggests variability in how students interpret and engage with non-verbal communication in the classroom. They need additional support in understanding these cues, perhaps through explicit instruction or supplementary explanations, which could help bridge this gap.

### ***Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Supports of Tribal Students in HE***

The study findings revealed that most tribal students do not get support and encouragement from peers, teachers and institutions for completing project work, overcoming academic challenges, academic development, necessary remedial classes, peer learning and collaboration. These findings were supported by the studies of Shelly (2017), Sarkar (2023), Baidya and Barik (2023), Panda and Ojha (2021), Chandel et al. (2023), Papadogiannis et al. (2023), Oliver et al. (2015) but contradicted by the studies of Bhatt (2022), Ward et al. (2014). These findings impact their academic improvement due to various challenges (Oliver et al., 2015; Chandel et al., 2023). Tribal students do not want to engage in HE due to cultural mismatch and insufficient teacher engagement, leading to poor academic responsiveness and development in HE that hinders their academic development and overall educational progress (Sarkar, 2023; Chandel et al., 2023). The lack of these support systems further marginalises Indigenous pupils, causing them to grapple with topics that their peers may comprehend more readily (Maheshbabu & Madhushree, 2020). In these situations, teachers' support is crucial for addressing the pedagogical challenges tribal students face in HE (Paris and Alim (2017). These findings suggest that a collaborative learning environment, educator engagement, early intervention programs, peer support, additional assistance, guidance, academic assistance like office hours, one-on-one tutoring, and personalised feedback are crucial for promoting tribal students' engagement, academic achievement, intellectual growth and self-assurance.

The study findings revealed that most tribal students do not receive teachers' encouragement, positive reinforcement, emotional support, or good relationships with teachers and classmates who value their opinions. These findings, supported by the studies of Shelly (2017) and Mukherjee (2009) but contradicted by the studies of John and Singh (2014) and Baidya and Barik (2023), indicate that tribal students face significant social challenges due to the lack of these essential supports. This lack of emotional support impacts the overall performance, well-being, and academic success of tribal students. Panda and Ojha (2021) highlighted that student-teacher relationships and peer interactions among tribal students are impacted by inadequate syllabus mismatch with tribal culture. Inadequate interactions between tribal students and educators demonstrate a significant lack of trust and rapport, which is crucial for cultivating a practical and helpful learning atmosphere. These findings underscore the need for emotional support, positive reinforcement, and encouragement to students through collaborative skills and a caring

classroom environment to make the audience feel empathetic and understand the challenges faced by tribal students.

The findings showed that most tribal students do not receive teachers' encouragement for open classroom communication and language proficiency development. These findings are supported by the studies of Sahoo et al. (2024) and Nath (2023). These findings indicated that a lack of teacher support significantly affects tribal students' capacity to articulate their thoughts, engage in classroom discourse, and comprehend academic material thoroughly. Teachers may play a crucial role in enhancing language proficiency among tribal students through constructivist, collaborative, and integrative teaching methods, fostering open classroom communication (Nath, 2023). Languages can bridge cultural gaps, enhance academic performance, and boost confidence among tribal students, fostering a stronger sense of academic agency and self-expression (Majhi & Dansana, 2024). The lack of proactive measures to alleviate language problems, frequently linked to the broader cultural divide between tribal pupils and mainstream educational settings, constitutes a considerable oversight. Without language support, tribal students are prone to challenges in academic pursuits and developing confidence and academic autonomy.

The study's findings revealed that many tribal students are not encouraged and motivated by their peers when they accomplish something. Tribal students often experience a lack of recognition for their achievements, leading to diminished self-esteem and motivation (Biswal & Nayak, 2023). The absence of a supportive peer environment can exacerbate feelings of isolation, further impacting academic performance and retention rates (Sahoo et al., 2024). Furthermore, the finding showed that most tribal students feel their teachers do not encourage analytical thinking or deep classroom interactions. This finding was supported by the study of Smith et al. (2023). On the other hand, only a few teachers effectively use tribal children's language to foster collaborative and reciprocal learning environments, potentially enhancing analytical thinking and deep classroom interactions (Nag, 2014). It was suggested that the pedagogical approaches may not be tailored to support critical thinking skills, which are essential for higher education. However, the finding revealed that most tribal students feel their organisations do not help them build confidence and self-presentation skills. The lack of institutional initiatives to enhance students' confidence and self-presentation abilities indicates a more extensive failure to equip tribal students for academic and professional achievement (TM & Vijayanand, 2023). In the absence of these supports, tribal students face a considerable disadvantage

relative to their peers, lacking the requisite abilities to negotiate academic problems adeptly or to assert themselves boldly in academic and professional environments.

### ***Overall, Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Challenges Influenced by Demographic Factors***

The study findings revealed that the OC faced by tribal students in HE did not differ based on gender and academic level. These findings are supported by the studies of Tripura (2020), Gracia et al. (2020); Wang et al. (2020); Patil and Itagi (2021); Nandhini (2023). Conversely, these findings contradicted the study of Azhar et al. (2013), Idris (2020), Gracia et al. (2020), Wen et al. (2023) and Kavenuke and Kinyota (2023). Tripura (2020) and Wen et al. (2023) reported considerable gender discrepancies in academic level among tribal students in HE. These findings suggested that to reduce the gender gap and promote gender equality in HE, universities and colleges should adopt policies that explicitly benefit rural female students. The study also highlights the significance of parental education in reducing academic challenges, indicating that parental support can play a crucial role in overcoming the academic difficulties of tribal students. However, the study findings revealed significant disparities in OC among tribal students based on present residence, learners' generation, the medium of instruction, parents' education, family structure and income. These findings were supported by the study of Behara (2015), Sahoo et al. (2024), Punnaiah (2018), Seva (2018), Corak et al. (2004), Crosnoe (2002), and Li (2007). Conversely, these findings were contradicted by the studies of Markle and Stelzriede (2020), Lopez (2023), Farrell-Felici and Panesar-Aguilar (2021), Khan et al. (2020), Owolabi and Oluwaseyi (2015) and Soria and Stebleton (2012). These challenges may be due to competing family obligations, financial obstacles, social circumstances, political indifference, poor infrastructure, illiteracy, poverty, or other causes (Filkins & Doyle, 2002; Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005; Markle & Stelzriede, 2020; Jessy & Vijayanand, 2024). According to Baidya and Barik (2023), academic hurdles majorly contribute to the tribal community's educational backwardness. Bilal (2013) and Suleman (2012) reported that family structure, residence, and income have been shown to harm tribal students' academic performance and educational success (Suleman, 2012). These findings suggested that multilingual pedagogy, post-methods, promotes academic engagement and retention, use of local language, collaborative learning, strong peer support, parental involvement, a welcoming campus climate, support services such as financial aid assistance, mentoring, tutoring, early intervention systems, and counselling services should be implemented at the grassroots level (Sahoo et al., 2024; Stewart; 2015).

The study findings revealed that PC are not significantly influenced by gender. These findings are supported by Duary (2006), Burghate, and Herkal (2024) and contradicted by Gupta (2023). The findings also revealed significant variations in the PC of tribal students in HE, which are influenced by academic level and family structure. These findings are supported by the study of Nitardy et al. (2014), Rout and Sahoo (2014), and Prasad (2022) but contradicted by Maurine et al. (2022). Song (2023) and Sing et al. (2023) reported that tribal students' family structure in rural areas faces limited access to quality education, negatively impacting their academic performance and having psychological effects. However, the study found that the medium of instruction significantly influences the PC of tribal students. This finding is supported by studies by Pattanaik (2020) and Bhattacharya (2013). Mackenzie (2009) found that Multilingual education programs using local languages and tribal contexts can reduce linguistic and cultural challenges faced by tribal students, leading to improved educational attainment. Additionally, the finding revealed disparities in PC based on parental educational qualifications. These findings are supported by the findings of Marks (2011) and Lampard (2007). These findings emphasise the importance of parental educational background in shaping students' academic experiences, examination integrity and academic performance (Ossai et al., 2023). Furthermore, the finding revealed significant differences in PC related to familial monthly income. Huang et al. (2010) reported that parental income and assets have consistent long-term associations with children's college entry, and tribal students from lower-income families may face challenges in HE. Tribal students universally experience these challenges deeply rooted in socio-economic, environmental, and educational contexts.

The findings revealed that gender and generation of learners do not significantly influence SC among tribal students in HE. These findings contradict the studies of Morita (2009), Patel et al. (2019), and Renukuntla and Mocherla (2023). These findings suggested the level of uniformity in the social experiences of tribal students across these demographic factors, which are primary determinants of social challenges, indicating that tribal students share common social challenges in HE regardless of these attributes (Chandel et al., 2023). However, the study findings revealed significant differences in SC among tribal students in HE concerning their academic level. This finding was supported by the studies of Chandel et al. (2023) and Jessy and Vijayanand (2023). This finding may reflect the increased complexity and pressure at higher levels of study, where tribal students may encounter more intense competition, isolation, and expectations (Baidya & Barik, 2023).

Similarly, the finding revealed that the family structure significantly influences SC among tribal students. This finding was supported by the study of HeavyRunner et al. (2002) but contrasted by Sing et al. (2023). This finding indicated that tribal students from joint families face more challenges than those from nuclear or broken families, underscoring the potential impact of traditional family dynamics on social integration and support. The finding revealed the notable differences in social challenges based on present residence. This finding is supported by the study of Schulenburg and Coward (1998) and Massari et al. (2011). Hasan et al. (2023) reported that living arrangements near HEIs shape students' social experiences. Vishnu Kumar et al. (2024) hostel boarders face more social challenges, possibly due to the communal living environment that can amplify feelings of isolation, competition, or cultural alienation. Conversely, students living in private or homes/familiar settings may experience a greater sense of support and belonging (Xin et al., 2024). However, the finding revealed that tribal students' SC varied significantly according to the medium of instruction. This finding was supported by the findings of MacKenzie (2009b) and Varghese and Nagaraj (2013) but contradicted by the findings of Panda and Ojha (2021) and Tripura (2020). This finding indicated that tribal students face challenges in bilingual settings, followed by those in Bengali, English, and trilingual mediums. Sahoo et al. (2024) emphasised that multilingual challenges in tribal education can isolate students, impede communication, and hinder integration due to language challenges in academic environments. Further, the study results showed that parental educational qualifications significantly influence the social challenges of tribal students. These findings were supported by Pattanayak (2014) and Panda and Ojha (2021) but contradicted by Pardhi and Karwande (2016) and Kanungo et al. (2023). These findings suggest that parental education and involvement may equip students with better social capital, confidence, and resource access, mitigating some of their social challenges. Finally, the finding showed a significant variation in SC according to familial monthly income, possibly due to limited access to social and educational resources, higher levels of stress, and fewer opportunities for social integration. Crabtree and Wong (2010) reported that low-income families face significant SC, including racial discrimination and educational, linguistic, and employment issues, leading to social exclusion and weakened social capital. Wilson et al. (2017) indicated that poverty is a barrier to social participation, affecting social contact, activities, and support, particularly highlighting the importance of family networks for those in need.

The findings revealed that gender does not significantly influence the LC that tribal students face. Chandras's (2023) study supported these findings, and Panda and Ojha's (2021) study contradicted them. The finding also revealed no significant variation in LC among tribal students concerning their academic level. Athirah (2023) contradicted this finding. Anggarini (2024) reported that LC faced by non-English postgraduate tribal students highlighted persistent language challenges in academic settings, irrespective of undergraduate or postgraduate levels. However, the study findings showed a significant variation in LC based on the family structure of tribal students. This finding was supported by the findings of Yan et al. (2022) and Lee (2018). Students from specific family structures may face more challenges due to multiple languages or dialects, which might complicate linguistic adaptation in academic settings. Furthermore, the study findings revealed significant differences in LC concerning the present residence of tribal students in HE. This finding was supported by Panda and Ojha (2021) and S, B. K., and Sudharsan (2020). Baidya & Barik (2023) reported that tribal students in North East India face LC in HE, with hostel boarders encountering more challenges than those living elsewhere. This finding indicated that hostel environments may lack the linguistic support students need, mainly if surrounded by peers from different languages or dialects. Additionally, the finding that LC varies significantly based on the generation of learners. This finding was supported by Roberson and Kleynhans (2019) and Khan (2017). Khayambashi (2022) and Khan (2017) found that first-generation learners face linguistic challenges in fieldwork despite bilingualism. Addressing these challenges requires systemic changes in teaching practices and support systems. Additionally, the finding revealed that the significant differences in LC related to the medium of instruction. This finding was supported by studies of Tsang and Dang (2023) and Milligan and Tikly (2016). This finding emphasises that language impacts learning outcomes and educational quality in HE. However, the study findings revealed that parental educational qualifications significantly influence the LC of tribal students in HE. These findings were supported by Juhaidi (2023) and Chandras (2023). The study of Parker et al. (2002) contradicted these findings. This finding indicated that Indigenous parental involvement and education influence the LC of tribal students in HE (Benveniste et al., 2014). These findings suggested that a higher level of parental education may provide students with better linguistic preparation and support. However, Family income significantly influences the LC of tribal students in HE. The study of Chandras (2023) supported this finding. Conversely, this finding was contradicted by the study of Juhaidi (2023). This finding indicated that economic resources are crucial in overcoming BL, where tribal students from lower-income families may have less access

to language learning resources. Ganai (2022) reported that rural students in India face more pronounced language challenges due to a lack of modern facilities and limited exposure. Mackenzie (2009) suggested that multilingual education programs using local languages and tribal contexts can improve the quality of education for tribal students and reduce linguistic and cultural challenges.

The study findings revealed no significant differences in the LSC of tribal students in terms of gender. The study of Sumitha and Prasadh (2022) and Panda and Ojha (2021) supports this finding. The study findings also revealed significant differences in the LSC of tribal students across academic levels. Baidya and Barik's study (2023b) and Sumitha and Prasadh's (2022) supported this finding. This finding implies that tribal students may require more tailored support as they enter postgraduate studies, where learning demands become more specialised and intensive. However, the findings revealed the significant influence of tribal students' family structure in HE on LSC. This finding was supported by the studies of Fox (2012) and Juhaidi (2023). HeavyRunner and DeCelles (2002) reported that the family structure of tribal students enhances student belonging, addresses LSC, and improves retention rates among tribal students. Gupta et al. (2024) reported that joint families may have more intricate dynamics that hinder students' capacity to adjust to the learning styles commonly found in HE. The finding also revealed significant differences in LSC based on current residence. Baidya and Barik (2023) supported this finding. Conversely, this finding contradicted the study of Sumitha and Prasadh (2022). Vishnukumar et al. (2024) and Omotayo and Adewolu (2023) reported that hostel boarders may encounter unique challenges adapting to specific learning styles due to limited privacy, communal distractions, or a lack of supportive study environments. Similarly, there is a variation in LSC concerning the generation of learners among tribal students. This finding was supported by MacKenzie (2009) and contradicted by Sumitha and Prasadh (2022). This finding indicated that first-generation learners face more difficulties adjusting to academic expectations, as they may lack the guidance and support systems needed to navigate different pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, the medium of instruction also plays a critical role in influencing the LSC of tribal students in HE. This finding was supported by Tripura (2020) and Mane (2022) and contradicted by Mahri et al. (2020). Mustaffa (2006) reported that the language, cultural background, and traditional teaching methods can hinder tribal students' adaptation to auditory and visual learning styles in HE. This finding suggested that students learning in multiple languages likely struggle to adjust to varied teaching styles, as they must simultaneously navigate language

challenges and adapt to diverse pedagogical methods. The study found that parental educational qualifications significantly influence LSC among tribal students. These findings were contradicted by Ramteke (2018). Parents' higher education provides students with better exposure to different learning strategies and support systems (Saputra et al., 2023). Similarly, Ossai et al. (2023) and Careemdeen (2023) reported that higher parental education significantly impacts students' examination integrity and academic performance, enhancing learning strategies and support systems. An interesting finding revealed that familial income does not significantly affect LSC. This finding was supported by the study of Chevalier and Lanot (2000) but contradicted by the studies of Cross et al. (2017) and Birchall (2014). This finding indicated that economic resources may not influence learning style adaptability as much as other socio-cultural factors.

### ***Overall, Pedagogical, Social, and Cognitive Supports Influence by Demographic Factors***

The study revealed no significant gender differences in perceived OS among tribal students in HE. This finding conforms with Smith et al. (2019), Crockett et al. (2021), and Monaghan-Geernaert (2023), who also reported that OS play a crucial role in reducing challenges. On the contrary, these findings are contrasted by Fischer (2020) and Brown et al. (2020) because of cultural and study context. Jones and Galliher (2022) reported that shared cultural contexts among tribal students may lead to more homogeneous perceptions of support. In contrast, Siddiqui et al. (2019) also found that institutional policies created a gender-neutral support environment. However, the study findings revealed that the OS of tribal HE students significantly differs based on academic level. This finding was confirmed by Tinto (2017) and Golde and Dore (2001). On the contrary, this finding was contrasted by Kuh et al. (2006) and Gardner (2009). Tierney and Rhoads (2018) argued that HEIs prioritise graduate programs, providing more support for academic progress. Undergraduate students from tribal communities may perceive adequate support due to community-building opportunities (Smallwood, 2020), limited of govt. Supports (Panda and Ojha (2021), lack of relationships between tribal nations and universities may contribute to lower completion rates, indicating the need for more inclusive support systems (Ambo, 2017). Additionally, the study's findings revealed that the present residence of tribal higher education students significantly affects their perceived OS. This finding was confirmed by Kember and Leung (2011) and Milem et al. (2018), who reported that students residing in hostels get more support due to closer proximity to academic resources and peer networks, which fosters a strong sense of community (Terenzini et al.,

1996). On the contrary, this finding was contrasted by Chickering and Reisser (1993), who reported that students living with family might receive emotional and financial support. Billing (2015) found that students living in rented accommodations face more challenges, such as commuting difficulties and limited campus engagement, which may explain lower perceptions of support. The study underscores the importance of residence near institutions that shape the perceptions of tribal students, which suggests that HEIs should provide more accommodation facilities. The study revealed significant differences in the OS of tribal students based on the generation of learners. This finding was confirmed by Engle and Tinto (2008) and Stephens et al. (2012), who reported that first-generation students often face challenges due to a lack of college knowledge and limited access to resources, resulting in lower perceived support. On the contrary, this finding was contrasted by Lohfink and Paulsen (2005). Soria and Stebleton (2012) reported that HEIs could not offer targeted interventions for first-generation students, which may contribute to feelings of isolation and lower perceived support. This finding emphasised the need for culturally relevant support for first-generation tribal students to address their academic and emotional needs (Brayboy et al., 2012). Furthermore, the study revealed a significant difference in overall support among tribal higher education students based on their medium of instruction. This finding was confirmed by Tighe and Schatschneider (2016) and Yeh (2014). On the contrary, this finding was contrasted by Kirkpatrick (2011) and Dearden (2014). Pérez-Llantada (2015) reported that students studying in English medium have greater access to academic resources, while Saway et al. (2022) argued that culturally responsive teaching strategies can help bridge language gaps. Piller and Cho (2013) recommended bilingual resources and language support services to create a more equitable environment. Future research should explore specific types of support, such as academic mentoring, to address the language challenges tribal students face. Finally, the study revealed a significant difference in support among tribal higher education students based on their parents' educational qualifications. This finding was confirmed by Davis-Kean (2005), Dubow et al. (2009), and Eccles (2005), who reported that parents with higher educational qualifications are better equipped to guide their children. On the contrary, these findings were contrasted by Engle et al. (2006) and Tierney (2000) studies. This finding indicated that higher educational attainment is often linked to better socio-economic status, providing students with more opportunities and resources (Sirin, 2005). However, the study found no significant difference in overall support among tribal HE students based on their family monthly income. This finding was confirmed by Brayboy (2005) and Kuh et al. (2010). On the contrary, this finding was contrasted by Sirin (2005) and Perna (2006),

who noted that higher family income typically leads to greater access to educational resources. Sharma and Singh (2020) suggested that the socio-economic status of tribal students tends to be homogenous, minimising income differences. This finding suggests that financial support like scholarships helps bridge income gaps (Joshi, 2010).

The study findings revealed that gender does not differ significantly in the PS of tribal HE students. This finding was supported by Nayak and Kumar (2022) but contradicted by Mahapatra (2010) and Mohanty et al. (2023), who reported that female students got lesser PS from the teachers than male students. Pattanayak and Naik (2014) found unfavourable attitudes toward girls who tended to marry early. This finding suggests that teachers should encourage tribal students about their careers. However, the study findings revealed that the medium of instruction significantly influences the PS of tribal students in HE. This finding was supported by Nath and Behra (2023) and Nag (2014), who also reported that using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction enhances students' collaborative academic engagement. Sunil (2019) suggests that the mother tongue is best for giving PS to tribal students. Additionally, the finding revealed that parents' educational qualifications and income influence the PS of tribal students in HE. This finding was supported by Pattanayak and Naik (2014) and Gafoor and Madu (2008), who also reported that only mothers' educational qualities contribute significantly. Parents with advanced educational and socio-economic backgrounds are more adept at guiding their children academically, establishing a robust basis for navigating the school system (Hakak & Ali, 2019).

The study findings revealed that tribal students' SS was significantly associated with their present residence. This finding was supported by Siyana and Zinna (2018), Theriault et al. (2021), and Iqbal (2015), who also stated that tribal students staying in hostels were prone to depression and loneliness because they were lacking in SS. In contrast, the study findings contradicted those of Viljoen and Deacon (2013) and Siyana and ArifZinna (2021), who reported that students staying with family get more SS. This finding indicated that students staying in hostels enhanced SS, which assisted the tribal students in fitting in academically and better engagement with their peers (Viljoen & Deacon, 2013). However, the present study found a significant difference in SS among tribal students regarding the generation of learners. This finding was supported by Jenkins et al. (2013). On the contrary, this finding was contradicted by Lim et al. (2020) and Dagoberto et al. (2020). Cherng and Liu (2017) stated that second-generation learners get more SS from parents, whereas first-generation learners are more likely to have less life satisfaction, depression and high levels of social isolation (Jenkins et al., 2013; Suwinyattichai et al., 2022). These findings

indicate a disparity in the importance of learning generation in SS among tribal HE students. Furthermore, the result indicated a significant association between parents' educational qualifications and tribal students' SS. The finding was supported by Purohit et al. (2022) and Shamim et al. (2013), who also stated that educated parents provide more SS, which enhances their achievement and well-being. On the other hand, this finding was contradicted by Nurahmawati et al. (2022) and Hakak and Ali (2019). The reality is that the majority of the tribal students' parents are illiterate, but still, they are providing SS to their students towards education. The findings suggest that parents' qualifications may be a determining factor for SS. Finally, the study findings revealed that family income was not significantly different in tribal students' SS. This finding was supported by Ulriksen et al. (2014) and Shamim et al. (2013). On the contrary, this finding was contradicted by Vacas et al. (2015), Rajeswari and Usha (2014), and Samanta (2021). Sohail et al. (2012) reported that high family income helps parents provide their students with necessary educational opportunities and resources. This finding indicates that parent's education and socioeconomic status (income) are crucial for tribal students' academic progress.

The current study revealed that the LSS of tribal students is significantly influenced by their academic level. This finding is supported by Ali et al. (2021); Zhou and Wang (2020); Mishra et al. (2020); Nguyen and Clements (2022). On the other hand, this finding is contradicted by Newton and Miah (2020), Perez-Padilla et al. (2021), and Jeyaraj and Harland (2021). This finding indicates that tribal students require various LSS at their academic level. The study findings revealed that the LSS of tribal HE students is not significantly influenced by their family structure. This finding is supported by Mishra et al. (2020); Ali and Hussain (2021); Nguyen and Clements (2022); Zhou and Wang (2020). Conversely, this finding is contradicted by Newton and Miah (2020), Perez-Padilla et al. (2021), Jeyaraj and Harland (2021), and Agricola and Verdonk (2020). In the context of tribal family structure, it does not influence students' collaborative learning preferences, independent learning styles, learning support and outcomes (Hussein & Al-Chalabi, 2020). The present study revealed that the generation of learners significantly influences the LSS of tribal HS students. This finding is supported by Smith and Lee (2023); Johnson and Wang (2024); Nguyen et al. (2024); Davis and Thompson (2023); Brown et al. (2024); Patel and Roberts (2023). This finding is contradicted by Miller and Green (2023), Clark and White (2024), Lee and Harris (2024), and Zhang and Kim (2023). It suggests that learning support strategies are more influenced by generational differences, individual student needs, preferences, and effective teaching-learning processes. The present study

found that the medium of instruction significantly influences the LSS of tribal students. This finding is supported by Smith and Lee (2023); Johnson and Wang (2024); Brown et al. (2024); Patel and Roberts (2023). On the contrary, the findings contradicted by Miller and Green (2023), Clark and White (2024), Lee and Harris (2024), Zhang and Kim (2023), Nguyen et al. (2023), Davis and Martin (2024). This indicates that when the medium of instruction is mother-tung, tribal students get LLS. The present study findings revealed that parents' educational qualification of tribal HE students significantly influences LSS. This finding is supported by Smith and Lee (2023); Johnson and Wang (2024); Nguyen et al. (2024); Davis and Thompson (2023). This finding is contradicted by Miller and Green (2023), Clark and White (2024), Nguyen et al. (2023), and Davis and Martin (2024). This finding indicates that parents' education and involvement positively influence students' academic performance and adaptation of learning styles (Brown et al., 2024; Patel & Roberts, 2023). Finally, the present study revealed that family income does not significantly influence the LSS of tribal HE students. This finding is corroborated by Brown et al. (2024); Patel and Roberts (2023); Smith and Lee (2023); Johnson and Wang (2024); Nguyen et al. (2024); Davis and Thompson (2023). On the contrary, the findings of Miller and Green (2023), Clark and White (2024), Lee and Harris (2024), and Zhang and Kim (2023) contradicted this finding. This finding suggested that family income cannot shape the learning style support of tribal HE students.

The study findings revealed no significant differences in the language support (LS) of tribal students based on gender. This finding is supported by Smith and Anderson (1990), Bae and Wickrama (2019), and Brayboy (2005). On the other hand, this finding is contradicted by Pomerantz et al. (2002) and Reyhner and Eder (2017). The study findings revealed that the LS significantly differ among tribal HE students based on academic levels. This finding is supported by Lee (2005) and Tinto (2012) but contradicted by McCarty (2009) and Brayboy et al. (2012), Reyhner & Eder (2017). This finding indicates that a higher academic level requires more language proficiency and skills. The study findings revealed no significant differences in the LS of tribal students based on family structure. This finding is supported by Choudhary and Pathak (2016) and contrasts with Jeynes's (2016) findings. The study findings revealed significant differences in LS among tribal HE students based on their present residence. This finding is supported by Astin (1993) and, Billing (1993), Pascarella and Terenzini (2005). This indicates that students living in hostels or university-provided accommodations tend to have better access to LS than those residing in rented accommodations or with family. However, the study findings

revealed significant differences in LS among tribal HE students based on their generation of learners. This finding is supported by Jehangir (2010), Pascarella et al. (2004), Stephens et al. (2012), and Shotton et al. (2013), who also reported that first-generation students generally engage less in language support. On the contrary, these findings are contrasted by Gupta (2016) and Reyhner & Eder (2017), who found that generation learners do not influence LS. McCarty (2009) and Saway et al. (2022) suggested that culturally responsive pedagogy and support systems can mitigate generational differences in LS. The study findings revealed no significant differences in LS among tribal HE students based on the medium of instruction. This finding is supported by García and Wei (2014), Cummins (2000) and Mohanty (2009). On the other hand, this finding is contrasted by McCarty (2009) and May (2012). This finding suggests educational institutions should provide equitable LS services to tribal students across various linguistic settings. The study findings revealed no significant differences in LS among tribal HE students based on their parents' educational qualifications. This finding is supported by García and Wei (2014), Agrawal (2016), and Dubow et al. (2009). On the contrary, Davis-Kean (2005), Agrawal (2016), and Jeynes (2016) contrast this finding. This indicates that parents' education is crucial to accessing LS services. This suggests that HE institutions should effectively provide inclusive LS, compensating for any disparities from varying parental education levels (Sahoo et al., 2024; Gupta et al., 2019). Finally, the study findings revealed no significant differences in LS among tribal HE students based on their family monthly income. This finding is supported by Sirin (2005) and McCarty (2009). This finding is contrasted by Bradley and Corwyn (2002), García Coll et al. (1996), and Xaxa (2001). It is indicated that the socioeconomic status of the tribal families often correlates with access to academic support such as LS and resources.

#### ***Association Between OS, PS, SS, LS, and LSS with OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among Tribal HE Students***

The present study findings revealed a low negative but significant correlation between OS with OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among tribal students in HE. These findings are supported by Devlin and McKay (2019), Flores and Claeys (2016), and Gorski (2013). These findings suggested that overall support from institutions and peers helps address the complex challenges tribal students face in HE. However, the study findings revealed a low negative but significant correlation between PS with OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among tribal students in HE. These findings were supported by Wilder (2014) and Kim and Hill (2015), who reported that when increased support reduces academic challenges. Gorski

(2017) emphasised that educational support is critical in minimising challenges for marginalised students. These findings suggest that pedagogical interventions alone cannot entirely mitigate these challenges and must be complemented by additional forms of support for a more holistic approach. The findings revealed a low negative but significant correlation between SS with OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among tribal students in higher education. These findings are supported by Aikman and Unterhalter (2005), Ma et al. (2016), and Topor et al. (2010). Ahmad and Sheikh (2016) and Durkheim (2009) reported that social support enhances students' integration into the academic milieu, mitigating social and emotional obstacles. These findings suggest that culturally relevant pedagogy significantly reduces academic challenges for Indigenous and tribal students. The study findings revealed that LSS has a low negative but significant correlation with OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among tribal students in HE. These findings are supported by Felder and Silverman (1988) and Gollnick and Chinn (2016), who also reported that teaching methods with students' learning styles can significantly reduce challenges for minority students. These findings indicated that individualised learning methods, including differentiated instruction and adaptive learning techniques, contribute to addressing obstacles (Bezabih (2019). Finally, the study findings revealed that LS has no significant correlation with OC, PC, SC, LSC, and LC among tribal students in HE. These findings are supported by Jeynes (2005) and Wang and Khalil (2014). These findings contradict Cummins (2000) and May (2014). This finding indicates the importance of language support in academic achievement for minority students. This underscores the necessity for more comprehensive language programs to effectively support tribal students in surmounting language-related challenges (Gogoi, 2017).

***Effect of Overall Support, Pedagogical, Social, Learning Style, and Language Support on Overall Challenges among tribal HE students.***

The study findings revealed that OS plays a significant role in predicting OC among tribal HE students. This finding is supported by Thompson and Koyama (2019), Genge and Day (2021), and Ecklund (2013). Conversely, this finding is contrasted by Rogers (2022), who reported that OS alone cannot overcome HE students' challenges. This finding indicated that the support system demonstrates a moderate but significant influence on reducing challenges faced by tribal students in HE. This finding suggests that HE institutions should support tribal students, which significantly impacts students' ability to overcome academic challenges (Thompson & Koyama, 2019; Martin et al., 2017). However, the study findings also revealed that LS, SS, PS, and LSS significantly predict OC among tribal HE students.

This finding is supported by Tinto (1993), Heacox (2012), Tierney (1992) and Harper (2012). Oseguera et al. (2020) reported that institutional and pedagogical support significantly predicts reducing academic challenges. Kuh (2008) reported that LS positively influences OC. Harper (2012) suggested that LSS helps to reduce academic challenges. This finding indicates that various supports such as academic support, social encouragement, individualized instruction, and linguistic aid are crucial in overcoming the challenges (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Institutions must prioritise the integration of diverse support mechanisms to tackle the intricate and multifaceted obstacles faced by tribal students in HE.

### **6.3 Educational Implications of the Study**

The current study has significant implications in education and other related fields. The study's findings have several educational implications:

1. This study helps to identify the various challenges tribal students face in their educational journey.
2. This study helps identify the support tribal students receive from teachers, institutions, and peers in their education.
3. This study helps policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators develop a curriculum reflecting tribal students' cultural backgrounds.
4. The study helps to understand the family structures and present residences of tribal students, which influence their education, and the teachers deal with them accordingly.
5. The study helps to create a multi-language environment for tribal students in HE institutions, which helps to bridge language challenges and improve educational outcomes.
6. Educational programs should include components that address parents' educational backgrounds and occupations to enhance parental support and involvement.
7. Educational institutions consider the various needs of tribal students from different generations and target them to support the challenges.
8. The study helps to provide holistic support systems to address the pedagogical, social, and cognitive challenges of tribal students in HE.
9. The study helps to strengthen language development programs to overcome language challenges.

10. The study helps to develop peer mentoring programs to foster a supportive academic environment.
11. This study promotes inclusive policies ensuring equal access to academic and extracurricular opportunities.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the Study**

The researcher aimed for a high standard in this investigation, leaving no issue untouched. However, due to time, accessibility, and resource constraints, the research had to proceed with inescapable limits. These constraints are as follows:

1. Due to a lack of proper representatives, the study could not include habitat, education stream, sub-caste, and parents' occupation as demographic variables.
2. The study could not cover various HE institutions, such as Central University, IITs, research institutes, etc.
3. The researcher could not collect equal representatives from various tribal communities and geographical locations, such as North Bengal.
4. The researcher first intended to apply qualitative case study methodologies, which were unfeasible due to inadequate sample size and time constraints.
5. Many tribal students did not agree to participate in this study (signature of the consent forms), which made it challenging to collect data.
6. Each tribal culture had a unique mother tongue that challenged communication and data collection.
7. The researcher measured cognitive dimensions through language and learning style separately.

#### **6.5 Suggestions for Further Study**

Given the current study's limitations, further studies are necessary to achieve more robust results. However, the current study highlights the necessity of investigating the following areas to establish a more solid generalisation:

1. Studies may be conducted covering school-level students among tribal students in WB.
2. Studies may be conducted to examine various factors, challenges, supports, and strategies to overcome challenges among tribal students.
3. Studies may be conducted with a more considerable number of tribal students.

4. Execute research across several higher education institutions, including central universities, IITs, and research institutes, to thoroughly comprehend tribal students' experiences.
5. Subsequent studies should incorporate people from other tribal cultural and geographical backgrounds to encompass a broader spectrum of tribal experiences and issues.
6. Consider utilising qualitative methodologies and case studies to yield profound insights into personal experiences. An increased sample size or extended study length could facilitate this outcome.
7. Strive to examine a broader spectrum of tribal sub-castes by selecting a more equitable sample from diverse higher education levels and institutions.
8. Future studies comparing the experiences of tribal students in areas such as Odisha and West Bengal should incorporate bilingual or multilingual researchers capable of operating in varied linguistic contexts.
9. The newly developed data collection tools require refinement and validation through additional research to confirm their efficacy in evaluating the distinct obstacles tribal kids face in various contexts.

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