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Exploring the Role of Emotional Maturity among Tribal Adolescent Girls during the Transition from Village Life to Residential Schooling

[1]Hemlata Mahawar, [2]Dr. Monica Dungarwal

[1]Assistant Professor, SMPBJ Government College Sheoganj, Sirohi

[2]Professor Government Meera Girls College, Udaipur

ABSTRACT

Moving from village life to a residential school can bring new opportunities and new emotional challenges for tribal adolescent girls. Girls may be excited about education and independence, but they may also miss their families, face language difficulties, build new friendships, and learn unfamiliar routines. Emotional maturity may help them recognise feelings, express them in safe ways, solve problems, and seek support. This paper proposes a qualitative study to explore how tribal adolescent girls understand emotional maturity during this transition. The review draws on studies about emotional maturity among adolescents, school adjustment, language-related challenges in tribal residential schools, and the wellbeing and cultural identity of Indigenous students. A conceptual framework is included to guide the research. The study may help schools and families better understand girls' experiences and develop culturally respectful ways to support their adjustment.

Keywords: emotional maturity, tribal adolescent girls, residential schooling, school transition, qualitative research, adjustment, cultural identity

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is an important stage of life. During this period, young people experience changes in their bodies, thoughts, feelings, and relationships. They begin to make more decisions and develop a clearer understanding of themselves. Emotional maturity is often discussed as the ability to understand and manage feelings, respond thoughtfully, and maintain relationships. Ravichandra (2024) reviews emotional maturity among adolescents and explains that it includes recognising feelings and responding to situations in an appropriate way. Jobson (2020) also discusses the importance of emotional maturity during adolescence. These ideas provide a starting point for understanding how girls may respond to a major change in their lives.

Emotional maturity should not be treated as a fixed quality that a girl either has or does not have. It develops over time and can be affected by relationships, family experiences, school conditions, culture, and the support available to a young person. A girl who cries because she misses home is not necessarily emotionally immature. Her feelings may be a natural response to separation from people and places that are important to her.

For tribal adolescent girls, moving from a village home to a residential school can involve several changes at the same time. They may live away from parents and siblings, follow a new daily routine, study in a different language, share rooms with other students, and form

relationships with teachers and residential staff. Some girls may feel proud and hopeful about their education. Others may feel lonely, worried, shy, or confused. A single girl may experience both positive and difficult feelings.

Research from Attapadi, South India, highlights the importance of understanding residential schooling in relation to Indigenous children's wellbeing, identity, family and community connections. George et al. (2024) reported concerns that included disconnection from cultural identity and community life, as well as confusion and stress among young people. Their work shows that residential schooling should not be studied only as a change of school; it should also be understood in relation to culture, belonging, and community relationships.

Mander et al. (2015), in a study of Aboriginal boys attending boarding school in Western Australia, described experiences related to homesickness, school belonging, identity, friendships, family relationships, and cultural connectedness. Although the setting and participants differ from the proposed Indian study, the research offers useful ideas about what students may experience when they live away from home for education. In Kerala, Muneer and Saleem (2020a) discussed language-related problems in tribal residential schools, including communication difficulties between students and teachers. Language can affect learning and may also affect a student's confidence and comfort in a new environment.

Studies have also considered emotional maturity and academic achievement among adolescents. Kumar and Mishra (2016) reviewed studies on emotional maturity and academic achievement, while Sharma and Kumar (2021) reviewed work on emotional maturity and academic achievement motivation. These reviews suggest that emotional maturity is a useful area to examine in educational settings. However, numerical measures alone may not fully explain how girls understand their feelings or how they cope with separation, new relationships, and cultural change.

The present paper therefore proposes a qualitative exploration of emotional maturity among tribal adolescent girls during the transition from village life to residential schooling. The aim is to listen to girls' own descriptions and understand how their experiences are shaped by family, peers, school staff, language, and cultural identity.

2. OBJECTIVES

To explore how tribal adolescent girls describe emotional maturity during the transition from village life to residential schooling.

To understand the feelings and challenges girls experience when they begin living away from their families.

To explore the coping practices and support systems girls describe as helpful during this transition.

To understand how language, school environment, family relationships, and cultural identity may shape girls' emotional adjustment.

To collect girls' suggestions for making residential schooling more welcoming and supportive.

Emotional maturity during adolescence

Emotional maturity is commonly connected with recognising feelings, managing reactions, thinking before acting, and responding to other people with care. Ravichandra (2024) reviews emotional maturity as a topic in adolescent development. Ghosh (2019) studied emotional maturity among school students and reported differences between boys and girls in the study sample. Sinha's (2014) study also focused on emotional maturity among tribal and non-tribal adolescent girls. These studies show that emotional maturity has been examined among adolescents, including girls and tribal populations.

However, results from a scale-based study do not explain every girl's personal story. Emotional maturity should not be judged only by whether a girl appears calm or does not cry. Expressing sadness, asking for help, or talking about a problem may be healthy responses. In this proposed study, emotional maturity will be explored through the ways girls describe understanding feelings, responding to difficult moments, making decisions, and seeking support.

Leaving home and adjusting to residential life

Living away from family can change a student's daily life. Girls may need to adapt to fixed schedules, shared living spaces, new rules, and unfamiliar people. They may miss home food, village activities, family conversations, or familiar language. They may also enjoy learning new things, making friends, and preparing for future goals. Mander et al. (2015) found that boarding-school transition could involve homesickness, belonging, identity, friendships, and changes in family relationships. These themes provide useful areas for interviews, although the proposed study must not assume that girls in India will have the same experiences.

George et al. (2024) emphasised the need to consider the cultural and community effects of residential schooling for Indigenous youth in Attapadi. Their study raises important questions about how students maintain connections with their community and way of life while attending school away from home.

Language and communication

Language may shape a student's classroom experience and her ability to form relationships. Muneer and Saleem (2020a) examined language-related problems in tribal residential schools in Kerala and discussed communication challenges between students and teachers. When students are learning in a language that is different from the one they use at home, they may hesitate to ask questions or may worry about making mistakes. These difficulties may affect confidence and participation, but this should be explored rather than assumed for every participant.

A supportive school environment may recognise the value of girls' home languages and help them understand lessons and routines. Language is not only a learning issue; it may also be connected with identity, belonging, and the ability to express emotions.

Emotional maturity, adjustment, and learning

Kumar and Mishra (2016) reviewed studies on emotional maturity and academic achievement, and Sharma and Kumar (2021) reviewed research on emotional maturity and academic achievement motivation. Jobson (2020) discussed why emotional maturity matters

during adolescence. Together, these sources provide a reason to explore how girls understand and manage emotions while studying in a new environment. Muneer and Saleem (2020b) examined adjustment among tribal residential-school students in Kerala using a survey approach. Their work considered emotional, social, and educational adjustment. This provides a relevant background for the proposed study, which would add detailed descriptions of how girls themselves explain adjustment and emotional coping. The two approaches are different: a survey can describe patterns across a sample, while interviews can explore the meaning behind individual experiences.

School conditions and available support

A student's adjustment is influenced not only by personal coping but also by the environment around her. Bala Krishnan and Sudharsan (2020) examined higher secondary tribal residential schools in Tiruvannamalai district, Tamil Nadu, and discussed school conditions and challenges. Daily routines, safety, food, privacy, access to trusted adults, opportunities to contact family, and ways of reporting problems-these conditions may influence whether a girl feels secure enough to express emotions and seek support.

Helpful support may include a trusted teacher or warden, a supportive friend, a peer-buddy system for new students, clear explanations of school routines, and regular contact with family. Such supports should be considered possibilities, not assumed solutions.

Stress, resilience, and safety

Sharma et al. (2026) studied abuse, perceived stress, and resilience among tribal girls and compared them with girls attending government schools. This work makes it important to consider safety and stress when studying girls' wellbeing.

Resilience should not be used to suggest that girls must tolerate unfair or unsafe conditions on their own. A supportive school is responsible for providing safe conditions, respectful relationships, and clear ways to seek help. Emotional maturity and resilience are best explored alongside the support and barriers that girls experience.

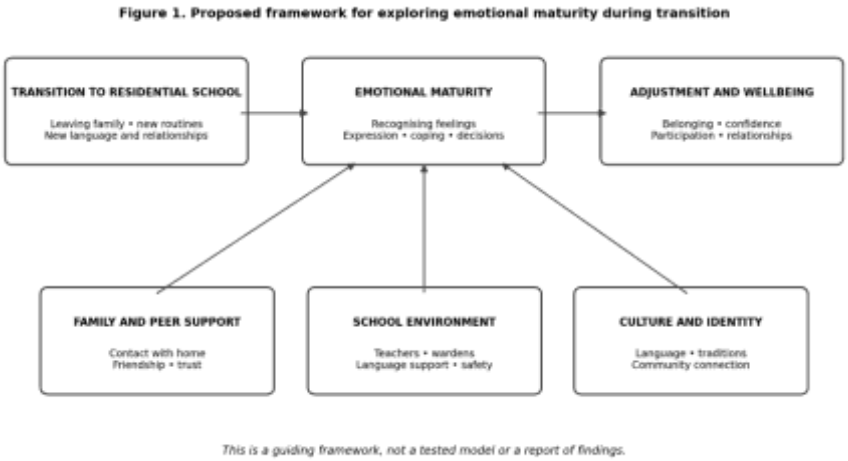


Figure 1. Proposed framework for exploring emotional maturity during transition to residential schooling.

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Proposed conceptual framework

Figure 1 presents a framework to guide data collection. It suggests that the transition to residential school, emotional maturity, adjustment, and wellbeing may be connected. Family and peer support, school conditions, language, culture, and identity may shape this experience.

Table 1. Suggested areas for future exploration

Area	What to explore	Question prompt
Emotional awareness	Recognising and naming feelings	What feelings did you have during your first weeks?
Emotional coping	Ways of responding to sadness, worry, anger, or loneliness	What do you usually do when you feel upset?
Language and communication	Comfort in class and with adults or peers	Has language ever made communication difficult?
Relationships and support	Family contact, friendships, trusted adults	Who helps you when you have a problem?
Culture and identity	Connection to home, language, traditions, community	What helps you feel connected to your village and culture?
School environment	Safety, routines, privacy, access to help	What would make residential life easier for new students?

Note: These suggestions should be refined using the girls' accounts and the needs of each school.

CONCLUSION

Moving from village life to residential schooling can bring educational opportunities as well as emotional and social changes for tribal adolescent girls. Emotional maturity may involve understanding feelings, managing reactions, making decisions, and asking for support. However, these abilities should be understood in relation to family contact, language, friendships, school conditions, safety, culture, and identity. Girls should not be blamed for finding the transition difficult. The literature reviewed in this paper provides a basis for exploring emotional maturity and residential-school adjustment.

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