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# FORMAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR BIRHOR COMMUNITY IN PURULIA DISTRICT: ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

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**ABSTRACT**

*In the globalized era, people live in a healthy and comfortable environment. However, some communities have found themselves in a precarious situation due to their inability to meet their basic needs, which are essential for their daily survival. The Birhor (PVTGs) community is one of the very backward tribes; they are still like primitive humans.*

*This paper investigates the lifestyle challenges of the primitive tribe of 'Birhor' in the Purulia district. The investors are trying to understand their overall socio-cultural perspective and education. Who should improve sustainable development? The ethnographical method introduced investors to the qualitative research approach. Data collection involved the use of personal interviews and participatory observations. Consequently, this study connected investors to important issues and solutions regarding the barriers to formal education and sustainability development.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Birhor Community, Purulia district, Formal Education, Sustainable Development,*

## INTRODUCTION

'**BIRHOR**' is one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) that lives in Purulia district. This community resides in very remote areas of Purulia, including Jhalda - I, Baghmundi, and Balarampur blocks. The words 'BIR' and 'HOR' determine the etymological meaning of 'Birhor'. BIR signifies 'forest', while HOR refers to men, i.e., 'forest people'. The problem lies in the rapid development of India's socio-economic, socio-cultural, and free and compulsory education systems, while the PVTGS has not significantly altered their lifestyle. It appears that they are still living like primitive humans. Daily life is very difficult. They exhibit all the imperfections inherent in human existence. They still live a nomadic life. They don't have a fixed source of income. Special. They rely heavily on nature and the forest for their livelihood (Mukhopadhyay, G. 2020). They are still hunting wild animals, such as pigs and rabbits, trapping birds, collecting honey in the forest, and selling local hats. The Birhor people speak their own unique Birhor language, which is partly related to the Austroasiatic language family. This language shares some similarities with the Santhali and Mudari languages. The most alarming thing is that this tribe's education rate in Purulia District is shallow.

## RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The 'Right to Education Act of 2009' in India mandates that every child, regardless of caste, creed, color, and religion, receives compulsory and free quality education. The Constitution also mentions education, prompting both the state and central governments to take significant steps to address this horrible issue and ensure formal education for Birhor children. Without proper education, this primitive tribe cannot increase their social mobility. In the present situation, we must examine the social isolation and lack of awareness of the benefits of formal education in this community.

Sustainable development is a dynamic approach to ensuring every individual's socio-economic growth, social equality, optimal health, and well-being. Birhor people have no opportunity to make sure their lives are sustainable. From this perspective, researchers have focused on the main challenges facing the Birhor tribe to ensure formal education and sustainable development. Also, researchers try to find some possible strategies for improvement.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explain the primary issues the Birhor community faces in pursuing formal education in Purulia District.
- To investigate the primary obstacles hindering the sustainable growth of the Birhor community in Purulia District.

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- To understand the strategies for enhancing the Birhor Community's formal education and sustainable development.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, researchers have conducted qualitative research based on the ethnographic method. Open-ended interviews and participatory observation served as the primary data collection methods, while government reports, books, and journals served as secondary sources.

## STUDY AREA

The researchers conducted this study in three blocks of the Purulia district in West Bengal. Researchers have shown the study area in the table and map below.

| Name of the Block | Name of the Village |
|---|---|
| 1. Jhalda – I | a) Khamar, b) Ulgara, c) Mahultarh |
| 2. Baghmundi | a) Bhupatipally, b) Bareriya |
| 3. Balarampur | a) Bersa |

**Figure no. 1: Map of Purulia District block wise (West Bengal)**




Source of image: http://purulia.gov.in/distAdmin/blocks/blocks.html

## DISCUSSION

- To explain the primary issues the Birhor community faces in pursuing formal education in Purulia District.

**Issues of Pursuing Formal Education:**

**Socio-Economic factor:**

a) **Poverty-related issue:** The people of the Birhor tribe are largely below the poverty line, which limits their ability to afford minimum educational expenses, uniforms, and other school-related accessories.

b) **Livelihood Dependence Factor**: The Birhor people are still part of the ancient nomadic lifestyle and labor class, and as a result, their awareness of schooling has not yet developed.

**2. Cultural Issues:**

**a)** **Language barrier:** Birhor children struggle to understand and participate because their language differs from the medium of instruction in most schools, which is mainly Bengali or Hindi.

b) **Cultural issue:** The resulting situation of the Birhor people further strengthens the negative attitude towards schooling as their upper-class Indian society does not embrace intercultural assimilation. We should focus on this aspect of the Indian education system.

**3. Educational Infrastructure issues**

**a)** **Support and community involvement:** In this regard, the present insightful education system does not offer special extra tenement, personal consultation, or community participation options for Birhor people. This small tribe finds it difficult to adopt a formal educational system.

b) **Lack of Quality of Education:** These communities are severely deficient in qualified personnel and textbooks, and they often do not have opportunities to attract qualified teachers.

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**4. Social issues**

a) **Caste-based discrimination** is the main problem in India's tribe community, where SC and ST students still face discrimination based on caste in school education.

b) **Community awareness:** In the Purulia area's Birhor community, they're not aware of the importance of education to their children.

**5. Government and Policy Issues**

a) **Lack of fruitful policy implementation:** Although governments and NGOs are now paying special attention to these primitive tribes, their overall development is not improving due to the successful implementation of these policies.

b) **Inadequate Assistance Initiatives:** The various social welfare organizations should not provide Birhor parents with adequate support and assistance regarding education.

**Sustainable Development Issues**

**1. Economic Development**

a) **Limited Economic Opportunities:** the livelihood of these tribes is very low, even in the current society. These tribes' financial incomes remain dependent on daily labor and forest resources.

b) **Lack of Skill Development:** There is a lack of emphasis on vocational training and skill development to enhance their efficiency for the improvement of socio-economic status.

**2. Environmental Sustainability Issues**

a) **Environmental Degradation:** Birhor tribes rely heavily on wild resources, which pose a threat to deforestation and environmental sustainability.

b) **Climate Change:** One of the primary factors destroying natural resources is climate change, which will have an impact on tribal lifestyles.

**3. Adequate Healthcare and Nutrition Issues**

a) **The Birhor community,** living in remote areas of Purulia, lacks access to healthcare. They are unable to access the primary medical facilities provided by the government.

b) **Malnutrition:** The unsanitary lifestyle of the Birhor community has resulted in high levels of malnutrition among some children. As a result, children do not develop mentally or physically.

**4. Social Inclusion Issues**

a) **Marginalization:** The Birhor marginalized community. People from these groups face discrimination and exclusion from social, political, and economic spheres.

b) The Birhor tribes lack empowerment and representation in local governance.

**Strategies for Solutions**

1) **Community Engagement and Awareness:** Conducting community awareness programs is mandatory for this primitive tribe to enhance their understanding of education and sustainability. The government and NGOs can take initiatives in this regard.
2) **Culturally Relevant Education:** Develop an integrated curriculum that places a special emphasis on the student's culture and language.
3) We should build suitable infrastructure in the residential schools for the children of these tribes.
4) **Economic Support Programs**: The government has developed its socio-economic status by utilizing its indigenous knowledge and vocational training. The Birhor people need a skill development program.
5) **Environmental conservation initiatives:** It enhances the sustainable utilization of natural resources and engages the community to respond to the long-term challenges that endanger the environment.
6) **Healthcare and Nutrition Programs:** introduce health and nutritional programs for the Birhor community, which can promote a healthy lifestyle for tribal people and contribute to their overall development and educational achievement.
7) Ensuring the effective implementation of the government's formulated policies is the goal of fruitful policy-making.

## CONCLUSION

India is a culturally diverse country. In Indian culture, so many primitive tribal groups preserve indigenous knowledge and rich cultural identities. Birhor is one of the embryonic tribal communities. They basically lived in the states of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha. According to reports, the current Purulia District has a very low standard of living. Their socio-economic status and rate of literacy are very low. Despite the West Bengal government's efforts to improve their lifestyle, the lack of a positive attitude has hindered the development of these tribal communities to enhance their social and sustainable development. The tribe's self-awareness will prevent them from assimilating into society.

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## *APPENDICES*





