

Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & REVIEWS

journal homepage: www.ijmrr.online/index.php/home

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF TRIBAL ILLITERATE WOMEN IN DHULE DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA: A STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Vanshree Ashok Baisane¹ & Dr. Jagdish Shankar Sonawane²

¹Research Scholar – (K.B.C.N.M.U. Jalgaon)

²Research Guide – (K.B.C.N.M.U. Jalgaon)

How to Cite the Article: Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.



<https://doi.org/10.56815/ijmrr.v5i7.2026.180-200>

Keywords	Abstract
<i>Tribal Women, Illiteracy, Socio-Economic Status, Education, Women's Empowerment, Dhule District, Livelihood, Rural Development, Government Welfare Schemes.</i>	The socio-economic development of tribal women is an essential component of inclusive and sustainable rural development in India. However, tribal illiterate women continue to experience multiple forms of deprivation, including limited access to education, employment, healthcare, financial resources, and government welfare schemes. Dhule district of Maharashtra has a substantial tribal population, where illiteracy remains a major barrier to women's socio-economic empowerment. This study investigates the socio-economic status of tribal illiterate women in Dhule district and examines the factors influencing their overall development. The objectives of the study were to assess the educational, economic, social, occupational, and health conditions of tribal illiterate women, identify the challenges affecting their livelihoods, and evaluate the role of education, awareness, and government interventions in improving their quality of life. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. Primary data were collected from 300 tribal illiterate women through a structured



The work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution
Non Commercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

	questionnaire, while secondary data were obtained from government reports, books, journals, and census publications. The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis and appropriate statistical techniques. The findings reveal that illiteracy significantly influences the socio-economic condition of tribal women by restricting employment opportunities, income generation, health awareness, financial literacy, and participation in decision-making. Agriculture and agricultural labour remain the principal sources of livelihood, making households economically vulnerable. The study further indicates inadequate awareness of government welfare schemes, limited access to healthcare services, gender-based inequalities, and insufficient vocational skills. However, education, skill development programmes, self-help groups, and awareness initiatives have demonstrated considerable potential in improving women's socio-economic status and promoting empowerment. The study concludes that strengthening adult literacy programmes, vocational training, healthcare services, financial inclusion, and awareness of welfare schemes is essential for the sustainable socio-economic development of tribal women. It recommends integrated policy interventions involving government agencies, educational institutions, local self-governments, and non-governmental organizations to promote education, livelihood security, gender equality, and inclusive development in tribal communities.
--	--

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Women play a fundamental role in the social, economic, and cultural development of every society. In tribal communities, women contribute significantly to agriculture, forest-based activities, household management, livestock rearing, and the preservation of indigenous traditions. Despite their immense contribution, tribal women remain one of the most marginalized sections of society due to illiteracy, poverty, poor healthcare, gender discrimination, and limited access to productive resources. The socio-economic status of tribal women directly influences family welfare, children's education, health, and community development. Therefore, improving their socio-economic condition is essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

Education is widely recognized as the most effective instrument for social transformation and women's empowerment. Literate women are more likely to participate in economic activities, access healthcare services, understand legal rights, and benefit from government welfare programmes. However, tribal women in many remote areas continue to face educational deprivation because of poverty, geographical isolation, inadequate educational facilities, early marriage, cultural practices,



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

and lack of awareness. These challenges result in low literacy rates, poor employment opportunities, and continued economic dependence.

Dhule district of Maharashtra has a large tribal population comprising communities such as Bhil, Pawra, Kokna, and Mavchi. Most tribal families depend on agriculture, agricultural labour, and forest resources for their livelihood. Limited educational opportunities, seasonal migration, inadequate healthcare facilities, unemployment, and poor infrastructure continue to affect the quality of life of tribal women. Understanding their socio-economic condition is therefore essential for formulating effective development policies and promoting gender equality.

The present study attempts to examine the socio-economic status of tribal illiterate women in Dhule district by analysing their educational background, occupational patterns, income, health, awareness, and participation in development programmes. It also identifies the major challenges affecting their empowerment and suggests appropriate measures for improving their overall socio-economic condition.

1.2 Tribal Population in Maharashtra

Maharashtra has one of the largest tribal populations in India. According to the Census of India 2011, Scheduled Tribes constitute approximately 9.4% of the state's total population. Tribal communities are predominantly concentrated in the northern, western, and eastern regions of the state, particularly in districts such as Dhule, Nandurbar, Nashik, Palghar, Gadchiroli, Chandrapur, Amravati, and Yavatmal.

The major tribes of Maharashtra include the Bhil, Gond, Warli, Kokna, Pawra, Katkari, Kolam, Thakur, Madia, and Andh. These communities possess rich cultural traditions, indigenous knowledge systems, and close relationships with forests and natural resources. Agriculture, forest produce collection, animal husbandry, and wage labour remain the principal occupations of tribal households.

Despite several governmental welfare initiatives, tribal communities continue to experience low literacy, poverty, malnutrition, inadequate healthcare, land insecurity, unemployment, and social exclusion. Women are particularly disadvantaged because they often bear the dual burden of household responsibilities and income-generating activities while having limited access to education, financial resources, and decision-making opportunities. Therefore, improving the educational and socio-economic conditions of tribal women remains a major development priority in Maharashtra.

1.3 Tribal Communities of Dhule District

Dhule district, located in the Khandesh region of Maharashtra, has a significant concentration of tribal communities, especially in the talukas of Shirpur, Sakri, and Akkalkuwa (now in Nandurbar district before bifurcation). The major tribal groups residing in Dhule include the Bhil, Pawra, Kokna, Mavchi, and Tadvi communities.



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(7),180-200.

The livelihoods of these communities depend primarily on rain-fed agriculture, agricultural labour, collection of minor forest produce, livestock rearing, and seasonal migration. Most villages are situated in hilly and forested areas where infrastructure, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, transportation, and employment opportunities remain limited.

Tribal women contribute extensively to farming activities, fuelwood collection, water fetching, livestock management, and household work. However, they often receive little recognition for their contribution to family income. Illiteracy, poverty, traditional social norms, early marriage, and inadequate awareness regarding government schemes continue to limit their socio-economic advancement.

1.4 Importance of Women's Education

Education is one of the most powerful tools for achieving women's empowerment and socio-economic development. It enhances knowledge, skills, confidence, and decision-making abilities while increasing opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and leadership.

Educated women are more likely to ensure better nutrition, healthcare, sanitation, and education for their children. They also become more aware of legal rights, financial services, government welfare programmes, and social responsibilities. Education reduces gender inequality, promotes economic independence, delays early marriage, and improves maternal and child health.

For tribal women, education plays an even more critical role because it enables them to overcome social exclusion and participate actively in community development. Adult literacy programmes, vocational education, digital literacy, and skill development initiatives can significantly improve their livelihood opportunities and overall quality of life. Therefore, promoting women's education is essential for sustainable development and inclusive growth.

1.5 Socio-Economic Problems of Tribal Women

Tribal women experience numerous socio-economic challenges that hinder their personal and community development. Illiteracy remains one of the most significant barriers, limiting employment opportunities, awareness of rights, and access to government services.

Economic insecurity is another major concern. Most tribal women depend on seasonal agricultural labour with low wages and irregular employment. Lack of land ownership, limited financial literacy, inadequate access to credit, and insufficient entrepreneurial opportunities contribute to persistent poverty.

Health-related issues such as malnutrition, anaemia, poor maternal healthcare, inadequate sanitation, and limited medical facilities further affect their well-being. Seasonal migration, poor transportation, and geographical isolation reduce access to education and healthcare services.



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

Social challenges including gender discrimination, domestic responsibilities, early marriage, low participation in decision-making, and inadequate political representation continue to restrict women's empowerment. Limited awareness of government welfare schemes also prevents many women from receiving developmental benefits.

Addressing these interconnected socio-economic problems requires integrated interventions focusing on education, healthcare, livelihood promotion, financial inclusion, gender equality, and community participation.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Despite constitutional safeguards and numerous government welfare programmes, tribal illiterate women in Dhule district continue to experience poor socio-economic conditions characterized by low literacy, poverty, unemployment, inadequate healthcare, limited awareness of welfare schemes, and gender-based inequalities. The persistence of these challenges restricts their participation in economic activities and community development.

There is a need to systematically examine the socio-economic status of tribal illiterate women and identify the factors responsible for their continued marginalization. The present study seeks to analyse these issues and provide evidence-based recommendations for improving their educational, economic, and social well-being.

1.7 Need for the Study

The present study is necessary because tribal illiterate women remain one of the most disadvantaged sections of society despite various developmental initiatives. Reliable information regarding their educational status, employment patterns, income, health conditions, and awareness levels is essential for effective policy formulation.

The study provides an understanding of the challenges faced by tribal women in Dhule district and identifies areas requiring immediate intervention. It also evaluates the effectiveness of existing welfare programmes and highlights opportunities for improving women's empowerment through education, skill development, and livelihood promotion.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it provides a comprehensive assessment of the socio-economic status of tribal illiterate women in Dhule district. It contributes to the understanding of how education, employment, healthcare, awareness, and social participation influence women's empowerment.

The findings will be useful for policymakers, government departments, tribal development agencies, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, researchers, and local self-government bodies in designing effective development programmes.



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(7),180-200.

The study also contributes to the literature on tribal development, women's studies, rural sociology, and social work by generating empirical evidence on the relationship between education and socio-economic empowerment. Its recommendations may assist in strengthening adult literacy programmes, vocational training, financial inclusion, healthcare services, and awareness campaigns, thereby promoting inclusive development and improving the quality of life of tribal women in Dhule district.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Tribal Women's Education

Education is widely regarded as the most effective means of empowering tribal women and promoting inclusive socio-economic development. Tribal women with educational opportunities are more likely to participate in economic activities, make informed health decisions, access government welfare programmes, and contribute to community development. However, several studies indicate that tribal women continue to experience low literacy levels due to poverty, geographical isolation, inadequate educational infrastructure, early marriage, cultural traditions, and gender discrimination.

Amartya Sen (1999) emphasized that education expands human capabilities and enables individuals to improve their quality of life through informed choices. Similarly, Naila Kabeer (1999) argued that education enhances women's agency, self-confidence, and participation in household and community decision-making. Several Indian studies have concluded that adult literacy programmes and girls' education significantly improve the socio-economic condition of tribal women by increasing employment opportunities, awareness, and financial independence.

Despite various government initiatives such as the Samagra Shiksha Programme, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), and adult literacy missions, educational attainment among tribal women remains considerably lower than the national average. Existing literature suggests that improving educational access and awareness is essential for achieving sustainable tribal development.

2.2 Socio-Economic Status Studies

Socio-economic status (SES) is generally measured through indicators such as education, occupation, income, housing conditions, health, ownership of assets, and access to public services. Numerous researchers have examined the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities and consistently reported that tribal populations remain among the most economically and socially disadvantaged groups in India.

Studies conducted by the Government of India and various academic institutions reveal that tribal women experience lower educational attainment, poor employment opportunities, inadequate healthcare, and limited financial inclusion compared with non-tribal populations. Socio-economic



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(7),180-200.

development among tribal communities is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including education, infrastructure, land ownership, social participation, and government support.

Research also indicates that women's socio-economic status has a direct influence on children's education, family health, nutritional outcomes, and household income. Consequently, improving the socio-economic status of tribal women contributes not only to individual empowerment but also to overall community development.

2.3 Poverty among Tribal Communities

Poverty continues to be one of the most serious challenges affecting tribal communities in India. Tribal households often depend on subsistence agriculture, agricultural labour, forest produce collection, and seasonal wage employment. These occupations provide irregular and low incomes, making families vulnerable to economic instability.

According to studies by the Planning Commission of India and NITI Aayog, poverty among tribal populations is associated with low literacy, limited productive assets, poor infrastructure, geographical isolation, and inadequate access to institutional credit. Tribal women are disproportionately affected because they frequently work in informal sectors with low wages and little social security.

Several researchers have highlighted that persistent poverty contributes to child labour, school dropout, malnutrition, indebtedness, and migration. Livelihood diversification, vocational training, self-help groups (SHGs), and entrepreneurship development have therefore been recommended as effective strategies for reducing poverty among tribal women.

2.4 Gender Inequality

Gender inequality remains a major obstacle to the socio-economic development of tribal women. Although tribal societies are often considered relatively egalitarian compared with other social groups, women continue to experience discrimination in education, employment, property ownership, leadership positions, and decision-making processes.

Research by gender scholars indicates that patriarchal social structures, traditional cultural practices, and economic dependence restrict women's participation in community development. Tribal women often perform substantial agricultural and household work while receiving limited recognition and financial rewards.

Studies further reveal that women's access to education, healthcare, financial services, and government welfare programmes is significantly influenced by prevailing gender norms. Promoting gender equality through education, legal awareness, and economic empowerment is therefore considered essential for achieving sustainable tribal development.



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

2.5 Employment and Livelihood

Employment plays a crucial role in determining the socio-economic status of tribal women. Most tribal households depend primarily on agriculture, agricultural labour, livestock rearing, and forest-based occupations. However, these livelihood sources are highly seasonal and vulnerable to climatic variations, resulting in irregular employment and unstable incomes.

Several studies have reported that limited vocational skills, inadequate market access, lack of financial resources, and insufficient entrepreneurial opportunities prevent tribal women from achieving economic independence. Researchers have emphasized the importance of skill development programmes, microfinance, self-help groups, and rural entrepreneurship in generating sustainable employment.

Government initiatives such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), and tribal livelihood programmes have improved employment opportunities in many regions. Nevertheless, substantial gaps remain in ensuring long-term livelihood security for tribal women.

2.6 Health and Nutrition

Health is a fundamental component of socio-economic development. Numerous studies have shown that tribal women experience poor health outcomes because of inadequate nutrition, limited healthcare infrastructure, poverty, low literacy, and insufficient awareness regarding maternal and child health.

Research indicates that anaemia, malnutrition, maternal mortality, infectious diseases, and poor sanitation remain major concerns among tribal populations. Geographical remoteness often limits access to healthcare facilities, resulting in delayed treatment and poor health outcomes.

Community health workers, particularly ASHA workers, play an important role in improving maternal healthcare, immunization, family planning, and nutritional awareness. Previous studies recommend strengthening primary healthcare services, health education, sanitation facilities, and nutrition programmes to improve the overall health status of tribal women.

2.7 Government Welfare Programmes

The Government of India and the Government of Maharashtra have introduced numerous welfare programmes for the socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes. These programmes focus on education, healthcare, employment generation, livelihood promotion, housing, financial inclusion, and women's empowerment.

Important initiatives include scholarships for tribal students, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), Mahatma Gandhi National



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(7),180-200.

Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), National Health Mission (NHM), Jan Dhan Yojana, and various entrepreneurship and skill development programmes.

Although these programmes have improved access to education and welfare services, previous studies indicate that many tribal women remain unaware of available benefits because of illiteracy, inadequate dissemination of information, administrative barriers, and geographical isolation. Researchers therefore recommend increasing awareness campaigns, strengthening local institutions, and improving implementation mechanisms.

2.8 Research Gap

A review of the existing literature indicates that numerous studies have examined tribal education, poverty, women's empowerment, healthcare, employment, and rural development. However, most of these studies have focused on tribal communities in general or on broader socio-economic indicators at the state or national level.

Very limited research has specifically investigated the socio-economic status of tribal illiterate women in Dhule district, Maharashtra by integrating educational, economic, occupational, health, social, and awareness-related dimensions into a single comprehensive study. Existing studies also provide limited empirical evidence regarding the relationship between illiteracy, livelihood opportunities, government welfare awareness, and women's empowerment at the district level.

The present study addresses this gap by providing a detailed analysis of the socio-economic status of tribal illiterate women in Dhule district using primary data. It examines how education, employment, health, awareness, and government interventions influence women's socio-economic development and offers evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, development agencies, and researchers.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To study the socio-economic status of tribal illiterate women in Dhule district.
- To examine the educational status and awareness among tribal women.
- To identify the major economic problems faced by tribal women.
- To study occupational patterns and livelihood sources.
- To examine health and nutritional conditions.
- To assess awareness regarding government welfare schemes.
- To analyse factors affecting women's empowerment.
- To suggest measures for improving socio-economic conditions.

4. Hypotheses

H1: Education significantly influences the socio-economic status of tribal women.



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

H2: Employment opportunities significantly improve the economic condition of tribal women.

H3: Awareness of government welfare schemes is associated with socio-economic development.

H4: Skill development programmes positively influence women's empowerment.

5. Research Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopted a Descriptive Survey Research Design to examine the socio-economic status of tribal illiterate women in Dhule district, Maharashtra. A descriptive survey design is appropriate for collecting detailed information regarding the educational, economic, occupational, health, and social conditions of the respondents. The design enables the researcher to describe existing conditions, identify prevailing problems, and analyse the relationships among different socio-economic variables without manipulating the study environment.

Study Area: The study was conducted in Dhule District, located in the north-western part of Maharashtra in the Khandesh region. The district has a significant Scheduled Tribe (ST) population, particularly in the tribal-dominated tehsils such as Sakri, Shirpur, and Dhule. The major tribal communities residing in the district include Bhil, Pawra, Kokna, Mavchi, and Tadvli. Agriculture, agricultural labour, forest-based activities, and seasonal migration constitute the primary sources of livelihood for these communities. The district was selected because of its considerable tribal population and the socio-economic challenges faced by tribal illiterate women.

Population of the Study: The target population of the study comprised tribal illiterate women residing in Dhule district, Maharashtra. These women belong to various Scheduled Tribe communities living in rural and tribal villages. The study focused specifically on illiterate women because educational deprivation significantly influences their economic opportunities, health awareness, social participation, and overall quality of life.

Sample Size: A total of 300 tribal illiterate women were selected as respondents for the study. The sample size was considered adequate to represent the study population and to generate reliable statistical findings regarding the socio-economic status of tribal women in the selected area.

Sampling Technique: The study employed a Multistage Random Sampling Technique for selecting respondents.

The sampling procedure involved the following stages:

Stage I: Selection of Dhule district as the study area.

Stage II: Selection of tribal-dominated tehsils.

Stage III: Selection of villages using random sampling.



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

Stage IV: Preparation of a list of tribal illiterate women with the assistance of Gram Panchayats, Anganwadi Centres, ASHA workers, and local community leaders.

Stage V: Selection of 300 respondents through simple random sampling.

This sampling technique ensured adequate representation of different tribal communities and minimized sampling bias.

Sources of Data: The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents provides an understanding of the personal and socio-economic characteristics of the tribal illiterate women included in the study. Variables such as age, tribal community, marital status, family type, and annual family income were analyzed to understand the background of the respondents and their influence on socio-economic conditions.

6.1.1 Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Age is an important demographic variable that influences educational opportunities, employment, health status, and social participation. The respondents were classified into different age groups to understand their age composition.

Interpretation: The study revealed that the majority of tribal illiterate women belonged to the economically active age group of 31–45 years, indicating that most respondents were actively engaged in household responsibilities, agricultural labour, and income-generating activities. A comparatively smaller proportion belonged to the younger age group (18–30 years), while elderly women constituted the least percentage. The findings suggest that middle-aged women bear greater economic and family responsibilities despite limited educational opportunities.

6.1.2 Tribe-wise Distribution of Respondents

The respondents belonged to different Scheduled Tribe communities residing in Dhule district. Major tribal communities included Bhil, Pawra, Kokna, Mavchi, and Tadvi.

Interpretation: The findings indicate that the Bhil tribe constituted the highest proportion of respondents, reflecting its larger population in Dhule district. Pawra, Kokna, Mavchi, and Tadvi communities also participated in the study. Although socio-economic conditions varied slightly among tribal groups, illiteracy, poverty, dependence on agriculture, and inadequate access to development opportunities were common characteristics observed across all communities.

6.1.3 Marital Status of Respondents

Marital status significantly influences women's economic responsibilities, social participation, and access to resources. The respondents were categorized as unmarried, married, widowed, divorced, and separated.



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(7),180-200.

Interpretation: The majority of respondents were married women, indicating their dual responsibilities of household management and income generation. A smaller proportion consisted of widowed and separated women, who often experienced greater economic insecurity due to limited earning opportunities and social support. Unmarried respondents represented the smallest category. The findings suggest that marital status directly affects women's socio-economic well-being and livelihood security.

6.1.4 Family Type

Family structure influences resource distribution, decision-making, financial support, and caregiving responsibilities. The respondents were classified into joint families and nuclear families.

Interpretation: The study found that a majority of respondents belonged to nuclear families, while the remaining respondents lived in joint family systems. Women living in nuclear families often reported greater financial pressure because household expenses and childcare responsibilities were shared by fewer family members. Conversely, women in joint families benefited from shared labour and family support, although decision-making was generally dominated by senior family members.

6.1.5 Annual Family Income

Family income is one of the most important indicators of socio-economic status. The annual income of respondents' households was classified into different income groups.

Interpretation: The findings reveal that most tribal households belonged to the low-income category, reflecting heavy dependence on agriculture, agricultural labour, and seasonal wage employment. Only a small proportion of respondents reported relatively stable or higher incomes. Low household income restricted access to quality education, healthcare, nutrition, housing, and financial security. The results clearly indicate that economic vulnerability continues to be a major challenge affecting the socio-economic development of tribal illiterate women in Dhule district.

Discussion

The demographic analysis demonstrates that the respondents predominantly belonged to middle-aged, married women from major tribal communities, living mainly in nuclear families with low annual household incomes. These demographic characteristics significantly influence their educational attainment, employment opportunities, health conditions, and participation in socio-economic development. The findings further suggest that poverty, illiteracy, and dependence on low-paid agricultural occupations remain the principal factors contributing to the socio-economic vulnerability of tribal women. These observations provide a foundation for the subsequent analysis of educational status, occupational patterns, health conditions, and women's empowerment in the following sections.



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(7),180-200.

6.2 Educational Status

Education is one of the most significant indicators of socio-economic development and women's empowerment. It enhances knowledge, improves employment opportunities, increases awareness of health and government welfare programmes, and strengthens participation in social and economic decision-making. This section examines the literacy level, educational awareness, and major reasons for illiteracy among tribal women in Dhule district.

6.2.1 Literacy Level

The literacy status of tribal women is a crucial determinant of their socio-economic development. The study specifically focused on tribal illiterate women, highlighting the prevalence of educational deprivation in the selected villages.

Interpretation: The findings reveal that the majority of respondents were completely illiterate and had never attended formal schooling. A smaller proportion had enrolled in primary education but discontinued their studies before attaining functional literacy. Illiteracy has adversely affected their employment opportunities, financial management, health awareness, legal knowledge, and participation in development programmes. Most respondents depended on family members or local officials for reading official documents, completing application forms, and accessing government services.

The study further indicates that illiteracy has contributed to low self-confidence, limited decision-making capacity, and reduced participation in community development activities. These findings demonstrate that educational deprivation remains one of the primary barriers to the socio-economic empowerment of tribal women in Dhule district.

6.2.2 Educational Awareness

Educational awareness refers to respondents' understanding of the importance of education for personal development, family welfare, children's education, employment, health, and social progress.

Interpretation: The findings indicate that educational awareness among tribal women is moderate but gradually increasing. Most respondents acknowledged that education plays a vital role in improving employment opportunities, increasing household income, promoting better healthcare practices, enhancing children's education, and improving living standards.

However, despite recognizing the importance of education, many respondents lacked adequate knowledge regarding adult literacy programmes, scholarship schemes, vocational education, and continuing education opportunities. Limited exposure to information, poor communication facilities, and inadequate awareness campaigns have restricted educational participation among tribal women.

The study also found that women who had regular interaction with ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), schools, and local government institutions possessed



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

comparatively higher educational awareness than others. This suggests that community-based awareness programmes can significantly improve educational participation and literacy among tribal women.

6.2.3 Reasons for Illiteracy

The study investigated the major factors responsible for the high level of illiteracy among tribal women.

Interpretation: The respondents identified several interconnected reasons contributing to educational deprivation. Poverty emerged as the most significant factor, as economically disadvantaged families often prioritize daily livelihood over education. Many respondents reported that financial constraints forced them to engage in agricultural labour and household work from an early age.

The findings further reveal that many elderly respondents grew up during a period when educational facilities in tribal areas were extremely limited, resulting in lifelong educational deprivation. Although educational infrastructure has improved in recent years, economic hardship and social barriers continue to discourage educational participation among tribal women.

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that illiteracy remains one of the most critical factors influencing the socio-economic condition of tribal women in Dhule district. Low literacy levels restrict access to employment, healthcare information, financial services, legal rights, and government welfare programmes. Although awareness regarding the importance of education is gradually improving, persistent barriers such as poverty, geographical isolation, gender inequality, early marriage, and inadequate educational infrastructure continue to limit educational attainment. The findings emphasize the urgent need for adult literacy programmes, girls' education initiatives, vocational training, digital literacy, and community awareness campaigns to enhance the educational status and socio-economic empowerment of tribal women. These results support the view that education is a fundamental catalyst for sustainable development, gender equality, and improved quality of life in tribal communities.

6.3 Occupational Status

Occupation is one of the most important determinants of socio-economic status. The nature of employment directly influences household income, financial stability, living standards, and overall quality of life. Tribal women in Dhule district are predominantly engaged in agriculture and allied activities because of limited educational qualifications, inadequate industrial development, and scarcity of alternative employment opportunities. This section analyses the major occupations of the respondents, including agriculture, agricultural labour, forest-based livelihood, and daily wage labour.



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

6.3.1 Agriculture

Agriculture is the primary occupation of many tribal families in Dhule district. Tribal women actively participate in almost every stage of agricultural production, including land preparation, sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation, harvesting, threshing, storage, and post-harvest processing. Despite their substantial contribution, women rarely own agricultural land or have decision-making authority regarding agricultural production.

Interpretation: The findings indicate that agriculture remains one of the major livelihood sources for tribal women. However, most respondents are involved as family workers rather than independent cultivators. Dependence on rain-fed agriculture, small landholdings, traditional farming methods, and limited irrigation facilities result in low agricultural productivity and unstable household income. Seasonal crop failures, unpredictable rainfall, and increasing production costs further reduce economic security. Consequently, agriculture alone is insufficient to provide sustainable livelihoods for tribal families.

6.3.2 Agricultural Labour

Agricultural labour constitutes the principal source of employment for a large proportion of tribal illiterate women. Respondents frequently work as wage labourers on farms owned by other farmers during sowing, weeding, harvesting, and other agricultural operations.

Interpretation: The study reveals that agricultural labour is the most common occupation among tribal illiterate women. Since many respondents possess little or no agricultural land, they depend on daily agricultural wages for household survival. Employment opportunities are largely seasonal, leading to irregular income and financial insecurity during the non-agricultural season. Low wages, physically demanding work, absence of social security, and limited employment alternatives further aggravate their socio-economic vulnerability. The findings suggest that reliance on agricultural labour alone cannot ensure long-term economic stability.

6.3.3 Forest-Based Livelihood

Forests constitute an important source of livelihood for tribal communities. Tribal women collect various minor forest produce such as fuelwood, bamboo, medicinal plants, honey, tendu leaves, fruits, flowers, fodder, and other non-timber forest products that contribute to household consumption and supplementary income.

Interpretation: The study found that forest resources continue to play an important supplementary role in the livelihood of tribal households. Women actively participate in the collection, processing, and marketing of forest produce, particularly during agricultural lean periods. However, declining forest resources, environmental degradation, forest protection regulations, and restricted market access have reduced income from forest-based activities. Although forest produce contributes to household survival, it is generally insufficient to meet the long-term economic needs of tribal



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

families. Sustainable forest management, value addition, and improved marketing support could significantly enhance the income-generating potential of forest-based livelihoods.

6.3.4 Daily Wage Labour

In addition to agriculture, many tribal women engage in daily wage labour in construction work, road development projects, brick kilns, small industries, and public employment programmes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Daily wage employment becomes particularly important during periods of agricultural unemployment.

Interpretation: The findings indicate that daily wage labour serves as an alternative livelihood source for many tribal women, especially during the off-season. However, employment is often irregular and characterized by low wages, physically demanding tasks, job insecurity, and the absence of employment benefits. Seasonal migration in search of work is also common among economically disadvantaged households, affecting children's education, healthcare access, and family stability. Respondents expressed the need for more stable employment opportunities, vocational training, and local income-generating activities to reduce dependence on casual labour.

Discussion

The occupational profile of tribal illiterate women in Dhule district demonstrates a heavy dependence on agriculture, agricultural labour, forest-based livelihoods, and daily wage employment. These occupations are predominantly informal, seasonal, labour-intensive, and characterized by low income and limited social protection. Dependence on rain-fed agriculture, lack of land ownership, inadequate vocational skills, and limited employment diversification contribute to persistent economic insecurity.

The findings suggest that improving the occupational status of tribal women requires livelihood diversification, vocational and skill development programmes, promotion of self-help groups (SHGs), entrepreneurship development, improved access to credit, sustainable forest-based enterprises, and enhanced employment opportunities through government development programmes. Strengthening these interventions would significantly improve household income, reduce poverty, and promote the socio-economic empowerment of tribal women in Dhule district.

Table 6.3: Occupational Status of Tribal Illiterate Women (N = 300)

Sr. No.	Occupation	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1	Agriculture	78	26.00
2	Agricultural Labour	132	44.00
3	Forest-based Livelihood	42	14.00
4	Daily Wage Labour	48	16.00
Total		300	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

Interpretation

Table 6.3 indicates that 44.00% (132) of the respondents were engaged in agricultural labour, making it the primary occupation of tribal illiterate women in Dhule district. This reflects the limited ownership of agricultural land and the heavy dependence on wage employment for livelihood.

About 26.00% (78) of the respondents were engaged in agriculture on their own or family-owned farms. However, most cultivated small and rain-fed landholdings, resulting in low agricultural productivity and unstable income.

The table further shows that 16.00% (48) of the respondents depended on daily wage labour, including construction work, road works, and employment under government programmes such as MGNREGA. These employment opportunities were largely seasonal and irregular.

Only 14.00% (42) of the respondents relied on forest-based livelihoods, including the collection of fuelwood, bamboo, medicinal plants, honey, tendu leaves, and other minor forest produce. Although forests provide supplementary income, declining forest resources and limited market access have reduced their economic contribution.

Overall, the findings indicate that tribal illiterate women in Dhule district remain heavily dependent on low-paid, seasonal, and labour-intensive occupations, resulting in persistent economic insecurity and limited opportunities for socio-economic advancement. The results highlight the need for livelihood diversification, vocational training, entrepreneurship development, and sustainable income-generating programmes to improve the economic status of tribal women.

Figure 6.3: Occupational Status of Tribal Illiterate Women

Occupation	Percentage (%)
Agriculture	26%
Agricultural Labour	44%
Forest-based Livelihood	14%
Daily Wage Labour	16%

6.4 Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women

Economic status is one of the most important indicators of the overall socio-economic condition of tribal women. It determines their standard of living, access to education, healthcare, nutrition, housing, and financial security. The present study examined the economic status of tribal illiterate women in terms of income, savings, debt, financial inclusion, and participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs).



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

Table 6.4.1 Annual Family Income of Respondents (N = 300)

Sr. No.	Annual Family Income (₹)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Below 50,000	118	39.33
2	50,001–1,00,000	96	32.00
3	1,00,001–1,50,000	56	18.67
4	Above 1,50,000	30	10.00
Total		300	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation: Table 6.4.1 reveals that 39.33% of the respondents belonged to families earning below ₹50,000 annually, indicating widespread poverty among tribal households. About 32.00% earned between ₹50,001 and ₹1,00,000, while only 10.00% reported an annual family income above ₹1,50,000. The findings clearly indicate that the majority of tribal women belong to low-income households, primarily dependent on agriculture and wage labour. Low income adversely affects education, healthcare, nutrition, housing, and overall quality of life.

6.5 Health Status of Tribal Illiterate Women

Health is a vital indicator of socio-economic development and human well-being. The health status of tribal women directly influences maternal and child health, nutritional status, work productivity, and family welfare. Due to poverty, illiteracy, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, poor sanitation, and limited awareness, tribal women often experience several health-related challenges. This section examines the health status of tribal illiterate women in terms of maternal health, nutrition, healthcare access, and ASHA services.

Table 6.5.1 Maternal Health Status of Respondents (N = 300)

Sr. No.	Maternal Health Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Regular Antenatal Check-ups	182	60.67
2	Irregular Check-ups	78	26.00
3	No Antenatal Check-ups	40	13.33
Total		300	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Interpretation: Table 6.5.1 shows that 60.67% of respondents reported receiving regular antenatal check-ups, indicating increasing utilization of maternal healthcare services. However, 26.00% attended health check-ups irregularly, while 13.33% had never received antenatal care due to poverty, lack of awareness, transportation difficulties, and limited healthcare facilities. The findings



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews*, 5(7),180-200.

suggest that although maternal healthcare services have improved through government programmes, a considerable proportion of tribal women still require better access to quality maternal healthcare.

9. Conclusion

The present study concludes that the socio-economic status of tribal illiterate women in Dhule district is shaped by the combined influence of education, employment, health, financial inclusion, and government welfare interventions. Illiteracy continues to be the greatest barrier to women's empowerment, limiting access to education, skilled employment, healthcare services, financial resources, legal awareness, and development programmes. Most respondents depend on agriculture, agricultural labour, forest-based occupations, and daily wage work, resulting in low household income, economic insecurity, and limited opportunities for upward social mobility. Poverty, inadequate educational facilities, seasonal migration, gender discrimination, and insufficient awareness of welfare schemes further reinforce socio-economic deprivation. The study clearly demonstrates that education is the foundation of socio-economic development, as it improves employment opportunities, decision-making ability, health awareness, financial literacy, and participation in community development.

The findings further indicate that improvements in healthcare services, financial inclusion, and women's collective participation have positively influenced the lives of tribal women, although significant challenges remain. Increased access to maternal healthcare, immunization, and nutrition services through ASHA workers has contributed to better health awareness, while Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have encouraged savings, access to credit, financial discipline, and entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, poor nutrition, high indebtedness, limited financial literacy, and insufficient vocational skills continue to restrict economic independence and overall well-being. Although government initiatives have expanded access to banking services, employment schemes, educational support, and welfare programmes, many women are still unable to fully benefit because of illiteracy, lack of awareness, administrative barriers, and geographical isolation.

Overall, the study emphasizes that sustainable empowerment of tribal illiterate women requires integrated and coordinated development strategies rather than isolated interventions. Strengthening adult literacy programmes, girls' education, vocational skill development, healthcare infrastructure, financial literacy, entrepreneurship promotion, digital inclusion, and awareness regarding government welfare schemes is essential for improving their socio-economic status. Collaborative efforts by government departments, Tribal Development agencies, Panchayati Raj Institutions, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, financial institutions, and community-based organizations are necessary to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. Empowering tribal women through education, employment, health security, financial inclusion, and social participation will not only enhance their individual quality of life but also contribute significantly to



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

family welfare, community development, gender equality, rural transformation, and the achievement of sustainable development goals in Dhule district.

AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

All authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright and ethical matters will take care by all authors. Journal and editors are not liable for aforesaid matters.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

The authors received no financial aid to support for the research.

REFERENCES

- Bhasin, V. (2007). Status of tribal women in India. *Studies on Home and Community Science*, 1(1), 1–16.
- Census of India. (2011). Primary census abstract for scheduled tribes. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Government of India.
- Desai, A. R. (2010). *Rural sociology in India* (6th ed.). Popular Prakashan.
- Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Ministry of Education.
- International Labour Organization. (2021). World employment and social outlook: Trends 2021. ILO.
- Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), 435–464.
- Kumar, A., & Singh, R. (2018). Socio-economic conditions of tribal women in rural India. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(2), 105–116.
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. (2021). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019–21: India fact sheet. Government of India.
- Ministry of Rural Development. (2022). Annual report 2021–22. Government of India.
- Ministry of Tribal Affairs. (2022). Annual report 2021–22. Government of India.
- NITI Aayog. (2021). National multidimensional poverty index: Baseline report. Government of India.
- Planning Commission of India. (2014). Report of the High Level Committee on socio-economic, health and educational status of tribal communities of India. Government of India.



Vanshree Ashok Baisane & Jagdish Shankar Sonawane (2026). Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Illiterate Women in Dhule District, Maharashtra: A Study of Educational, Economic and Social Challenges. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),180-200.

Sen, A. (1999). Development as freedom. Oxford University Press.

Sharma, S. L. (2012). Tribal development in India. Rawat Publications.

Singh, K. S. (1994). The scheduled tribes. Oxford University Press.

Sundar, N. (1997). Subalterns and sovereigns: An anthropological history of Bastar, 1854–2006. Oxford University Press.

United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. United Nations.

United Nations Development Programme. (2023). Human development report 2023/2024. UNDP.

World Bank. (2022). Women, business and the law 2022. World Bank.

World Health Organization. (2021). World health statistics 2021: Monitoring health for the SDGs. WHO.

Yadav, P., & Verma, M. (2019). Women empowerment through self-help groups: A study of rural India. International Journal of Rural Development, 38(1), 56–68.

