

# **Access to and Quality of Primary Education of the Children of *Santal*, an Ethnic Minority: An Exploratory Study in Godagari Upazila under Rajshahi District in Bangladesh**

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## **Abstract**

The title of this study is “Access to and Quality of Primary Education of the Children of *Santal*, an Ethnic Minority: An Exploratory Study in Godagari Upazila under Rajshahi District in Bangladesh”. The objectives of this study are I. To find out the gross enrollment rate (GER), and net enrollment rate (NER), II. To assess the cognitive achievement (learning outcome) of the students of the *Santal* III. To identify the causes for fewer enrollments in primary school IV. To examine the academic achievement of the *Santal* students, compare them to their mainstreaming counterparts. Being a descriptive study, the survey method, FGD, and document study have been adopted for data collection. The approach adopted in this study is mixed in nature, however the quantitative is dominating. The population of the study is all the primary school-age-going and enrolled *Santal* students at primary schools in Godagari Upazila in Rajshahi district. The sampling procedure of this study is cluster sampling. The sample size is 239 family heads of seven villages, 10 head teachers, 35 assistant teachers, 34 students of grade V, and 10 community leaders of the *Santal* community. The data were collected through an interview schedule, questionnaires, tests, FGDs, and document study. The net enrollment rate of the children of *Santal* is 96.26 and the gross enrollment rate is 103.73. The cognitive achievement status is below desirable. The children of *Santal* are lagging behind mainstreaming students in academic achievement. It is very essential to minimize the major factors to increase the academic achievement of the children of *Santal* at primary school to ensure inclusiveness and build up an equity-based society and a future generation.

**Keywords:** *Children of Santal, Gross enrollment rate, Net enrollment rate, Quality education*

## **Introduction**

In the social context of Bangladesh, the *Santal* is a part and parcel of our society. The *Santal* is one of Bangladesh's oldest indigenous communities. They

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have been playing an important role in Bangladeshi society for hundreds of years. In the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 target 1 indicates that by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

National Education Policy 2010 stated that “Primary education possesses utmost importance in our national life. Primary education is the basis of building up a skilled citizenry and the path to including the whole population within the education system. Equal opportunities will be created to ensure access of all sections of children to primary education irrespective of ethnicity, socio-economic conditions, physical or mental challenges, and geographical differences. This is the Constitutional responsibility of the state. Since this stage forms the foundation of subsequent levels of education, so delivery of quality primary education is a must. (NEP, 2010, p.11)

Measures will be taken to ensure the availability of teachers from ethnic groups and to prepare texts in their languages so that ethnic children can learn their indigenous languages. In these initiatives, especially in preparing textbooks, the inclusion of respective indigenous communities will be ensured. Special assistance will be provided to the marginalized indigenous children. There are areas where no primary school exists. Primary schools will be set up in these areas inhabited by ethnic people, both in hilly or plain lands. In some areas, there is a thin ethnic population. So, the schools may suffer from a dearth of children. So, to create opportunities for the enrollment of a sufficient number of children, residential facilities for teachers and learners have to be created. (NEP, 2010, p.15)

The National Education Policy also recognizes the need to pay extra attention to the needs of disadvantaged children (i.e. vertical inequality). It promises “to initiate special measures to promote education in the areas identified as backward in education.”

### **Background of the study**

Bangladesh is a country of cultural and ethnic diversity with over 54 indigenous groups of people along with the majority Bengali population. According to the 2011 Census, the country’s indigenous population is approximately 1,586,141, which represents 1.8% of the total population of the country (BBS, 2011).

There is a special project called “Developmental assistance for special regions (except hill tracts)” in the Prime Minister’s office in Bangladesh. In 2019, the honorable prime minister of Bangladesh delivered a speech in stipend giving ceremony among 500 students from the Plane Land ethnic group. It is articulated in the speech that Bangladesh has a population of about 3 million people and 87 thousand small ethnic groupings. 1.5 million and 87 thousand people are living in hill tracts, respectively, and 1.5 million in level land. The inhabitants of the tiny ethnic groups make up only 1.04 percent of the total

population. They each have their distinct cultural qualities. They are, nonetheless, a vital component of the Bangladeshi people. Bangladesh has a unique cultural feature: unity in diversity. Bangladesh is one of the few countries in the world with such a diverse population, religions, culture, and eating habits.<sup>1</sup>

The *Santal* is one of the oldest ethnic minorities in Bangladesh. Out of the total ethnic population, the *Santal* is 8.96% (Sarker & Razzak, 2014). In number, the *Santal* is the second largest indigenous community in Bangladesh. Approximately 80% of the indigenous population lives in the plain land districts of the North and South-East of the country (Halim, S, 2015). The *Santal* is mainly found to be living in the northern district of Rajshahi, Naogaon, Natore, Chapainawabganj, Bogura, Joypurhat and Dinajpur district. The *Santal* is disadvantaged even in comparison with other smaller indigenous communities in Bangladesh (Borchgrevink & McNeish, 2007).

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equality for all citizens. “The state shall take adequate action to develop a unified, mass-oriented, and universal system of education, as well as to extend free and compulsory education to all children until such time as may be decided by law.” The UN General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, as well as six particular references to indigenous people.

This agenda aims to “Leave No One Behind” which is of special relevance to indigenous people. Several goals of the SDGs are directed at indigenous people, including Goal 4 which calls for equal access to education for indigenous children. The country's ‘whole of society’ approach has been adopted to meet the demand for equal access to education for indigenous children. The *Santal*, an ethnic minority people in Bangladesh, are still lagging far behind in goal number 4 and its targets, especially enrollment and academic achievement of the children in primary school in Bangladesh.

### **Statement of the problem**

Constitutionally, every citizen deserves equal attention from the state. The *Santal* is still treated as an ethnic minority ignoring their basic demands of education. They are not qualified enough. As a result, the *Santal* ethnic minority requires more extensive cooperation to move alongside the majority population. It demands special attention to spread education among them (Sarker & Razzak, 2014). This study explores to what extent the gross enrollment rate, and net enrollment rate of the children of the *Santal* at the primary level. Does it focus on what sorts of socio-economic and cultural factors are the causes for not enrolled/fewer enrollments and poor academic performance in primary school?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pmo.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files>

Inclusiveness is being focused on concerns in education. There is still a burning issue about the fewer enrollments of the children of the *Santal*. This study is an attempt to reveal the scenario of the children of the *Santal* in primary education. It explores to what extent the school-going children are in school and what percentage is outside of the school machinery. This study also explores the status of the cognitive achievement of the students belonging to the *Santal* community. The researcher tries to find out the lacuna of the existing system. For this purpose, the study has been titled “Access to and Quality of Primary Education of the Children of *Santal*, an Ethnic Minority: An Exploratory Study in Godagari Upazila under Rajshahi District.”

### **Rationale of the study**

Education is a basic human right and enrollment at the primary level among indigenous children is generally much lower than national averages. This is largely due to their limited access to socio-economic status, education institutions, language barriers, inadequate resources, the prejudicial attitude of peers and teachers, and the overall stigma attached to ethnic minorities (D, Robert, 2016). Primary education is among the most significant sectors in Bangladesh. After independence in 1971, there were various efforts and interventions undertaken to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE).

Bangladesh's constitution guarantees "equal rights to all people" and "helps to promote affirmative action in favor of the underprivileged. “A significant portion of the *Santal* population continues to be deprived of basic education. It has been found that many indigenous children in Bangladesh are denied admission to primary education because they often do not speak fluent Bangla (Durnnian, Terry, 2007). In Bangladesh, in comparison with the majority of Bangla-speaking children, indigenous children have significantly lower enrollment rates, have higher dropout rates, and receive fewer years of formal instruction than the national average (Durnnian, Terry 2007). The enrollment rates may vary among indigenous communities. On the whole, approximately 44.5% of the indigenous children aged 6-10 years in Bangladesh get admission to primary schools compared to 80% of the Bangla-speaking group (Durnnian, Terry, 2007). Many children in Bangladesh are not able to go to school or have to drop out of school very early because the financial conditions of their families compel them to look for employment at a very young age or because they need to look after their siblings in the absence of their parents when they are away at work. Many indigenous children in Bangladesh are engaged in child labor in agriculture with their parents, or as ‘bonded labor’ in the households of local elite Bangalis (Sarker, Profulla, and Gareth Davey, 2009).

The gross enrollment rate in primary education in 2016 reached 112.1% and the net enrollment rate was 97.96%. It is a big question does it reflect regarding the children of the *Santal*? If not, why not? Here is a constitutional obligation to remove all sorts of discrimination against ethnic minorities. The reality is quite

different. A large number of the school-going children of the *Santal* are out of the purview of the primary school system. The 7th Five-year Plan identified that only 7.8 percent of all Chittagong Hill Tracts people complete primary education (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Though, they are comparatively more advanced than the *Santal*.

The children of five small ethnic groups- Chakma, Marma, Sadri, Garo, and Tripura are enjoying teaching-learning at the pre-primary and class I and class II with their languages.<sup>2</sup>

The number of the *Santal* ethnic population is the second-highest among all the ethnic minorities. The students of this particular ethnic minority living in the plain land are excluded from teaching-learning in their mother tongue. The *Santal* is one of Bangladesh's poorest and most disadvantaged ethnic tribes. (Samad, Muhammad, 2006). The *Santal* is generally not literate (Hossain, Kazi Tobarok, 2008). Hardcore poverty is also higher (24.6%) among plain land indigenous populations than it is in rural Bangladesh (17.9%). (Barkat et al. 2009). What are the reasons for fewer enrollments in primary schools of the children of the *Santal*? What is the socio-economic status of the parents of the school-going children? Human resources is an asset. Primary education is the foundation to ensure a better future for a citizen. It is the starting point for turning people into manpower. Why is equal access not ensured for the *Santal*? What is the status of the academic achievement of the enrolled children of the *Santal* in primary school? Do they compete with the children of mainstreaming people?

The constitutional obligation, the commitment of the world summit to the 2015 SDGs goal, and the 7th five-year plan re-emphasizing the enrollment of every child regardless of race, religion, and place of birth. The findings of the study may help to give information to the policymakers to understand the needs of the *Santal*. This study helps them towards better enrollment, academic achievement, and reducing the dropout rate of the children of the *Santal*. The policymaker can take the right action needed to enhance the vibrant participation of the children of the *Santal*. Indirectly, from the holistic point of view, it helps to increase the quality of life of the future generation of the citizens of Bangladesh.

### **Research questions**

The study tries to answer the following main research questions:

- I. What is the enrollment status of the children of the *Santal* at the primary level?
- II. What are the causes of fewer enrollments and dropouts of the children of *Santal*?

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

- III. What is the status of the cognitive achievement of the students of the *Santal* community?

### **Objectives of the study**

The overall objective of this study is to assess the status of the enrollment and cognitive achievement of the children of the *Santal* in primary education. It also highlights how the independent variables affect the enrollment and academic achievement of the *Santal* either positively or negatively.

The following are the specific objectives of this study:

- I. To find out the gross enrollment rate (GER) and net enrollment rate (NER)
- II. To assess the cognitive achievement (learning outcome) of the students of the *Santal*
- III. To identify the causes for fewer enrollments in primary school
- IV. To examine the academic achievement of the *Santal* students to compare their mainstreaming counterparts.

### **Hypothesis**

#### **Hypothesis: 1**

H0: The net enrollment rate of *Santal* children is fewer than the national enrollment rate at the primary level.

H1: The net enrollment rate of *Santal* children is not fewer than the national enrollment rate at the primary level.

#### **Hypothesis: 2**

H0: Cognitive achievement (learning outcome) status of the *Santal* student is below average

H1: Cognitive achievement (learning outcome) status of the *Santal* student is not below average

#### **Hypothesis: 3**

H0: Pass rate of PECE of *Santal* children is fewer than the national pass rate at the primary level.


H1: Pass rate of PECE of *Santal* children is not fewer than the national pass rate at the primary level.

#### **Hypothesis: 4**

H0: In the terminal evaluation the acquired marks in grades III and IV of *Santal* children are fewer than mainstreaming students

H1: In the terminal evaluation the acquired marks in grade III and IV of *Santal* children is not fewer than mainstreaming students

**The conceptual framework of the study**  
(Independent-dependent variable model)



Independent variables	Dependent variables
I. Education qualification of the parents/guardians	I. Enrollment rate
II. Family income III. Parents occupation IV. Education qualification of the family members V. Occupation of the family members VI. Bangla medium teaching-learning and textbooks VII. Mother tongue-based teaching-learning	II. Cognitive achievement

### Research Methodology

**The study site :** The study site in this study is Godagari Upazila under Rajshahi district where a good number of *Santal* people have lived for hundreds of years. Godagari is located at 24.4667°N 88.3306°E. The researcher collected data from seven villages belonging to wards number 1 and 4 respectively in the Rishikul union. Rishikul union is the representation of the Godagari Upazila.

**Research design :** The study used a mixed-methods approach, combining the both quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

**Unit of analysis :** The researcher has analyzed the responses from 239 family heads of the households, 10 head teachers, 35 assistant teachers, and 10 community leaders from the Rishikul Union of Godagari Upazila in Rajshahi district. Thirty-four *Santal* students of grade V were under the purview of this study to assess their cognitive achievement.

**Study population :** The total household of *Santal* in Rajshahi district is 5329 and the total population is 24,438 including males 12039 and females 12,399. In Godagari Upazila there are 11,440 *Santal* people live (BBS, 2011). The population of this study is all the school-aged children of *Santal* living in Godagari Upazila under the Rajshahi district in Bangladesh.

### Sampling

**Sampling procedure :** The cluster sampling technique has been adopted in this study. All the *Santal* households of seven villages of wards no 1 and 4 in

Rishikul union and 10 primary schools in the same union are the purview of this study.

**Sample size :** The sample size of this study is all the family heads of the 239 households 10 head teachers, and 35 assistant teachers from 10 primary schools had been included as respondents in this study. Besides, 10 community leaders and 34 students of grade V were respondents too.

### Data collection

**Sources of data :** Data have been collected mainly from primary sources in this study. Secondary sources like a result sheet of the primary education completion examination (PECE) held in 2019, mark sheets of grades III and IV, attendance register of all classes, and various published books, journals, newspapers, government circulars, research reports, and internet browsing have been viewed as secondary sources.

**Data triangulation :** The process of using numerous sources of data to improve the credibility of a research study is known as triangulation. In this study, the researcher collected the data from different sources like family heads belonging to the *Santal* community, head teachers, assistant teachers of the *Santal* students, *Santal* students of grade V, and the *Santal* community leaders.

**Data collection methods :** Data have been collected through the survey method by using three sets of different questionnaires, mainly from primary sources in this study, directly from head teachers, and assistant teachers from the primary schools. The tests have been exercised to assess the cognitive achievement of the 34 *Santal* students of grade V. In addition, FGDs have been conducted with the community leaders, and interview schedules have been administered with the head of the household to collect the necessary data. Besides, a document study was applied to collect data.

### Data collection instruments/tools

**Table 1: Data collection instruments/tools**

Methods	Objective Number	Tools/instruments	Respondents/Source
Survey	I	i. Structured interview schedule ii. Questionnaire iii. Questionnaire	i. Head of the household of the <i>Santal</i> ii. Head teacher of the schools having <i>Santal</i> students iii. Assistant teacher of the schools having <i>Santal</i> students



Methods	Objective Number	Tools/instruments	Respondents/Source
	II	i. Structured interview schedule ii. Questionnaire iii. Questionnaire	i. Head of the household of the <i>Santal</i> ii. Head teacher of the schools having <i>Santal</i> students iii. Assistant teacher of the schools having <i>Santal</i> students
	IV	i. Test	<i>Santal</i> students of grade V
FGD	I	i. Guideline	i. Community leaders of the <i>Santal</i> ii. Assistant teacher of the schools having <i>Santal</i> students
	II	i. Guideline	i. Community leaders of the <i>Santal</i> ii. Assistant teacher of the schools having <i>Santal</i> student
Document study	III	i. Checklist	i. Result sheet of PECE held in 2019 ii. Mark sheets of grade III and IV held in 2019

**Data analysis :** The data have been analyzed using qualitative and quantitative techniques. The quantitative technique has been expressed in numerical form. Data from the questionnaires have been analyzed through both descriptive using SPSS software version 25 (Statistical Package for Social Science). The descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, percentile, minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation) help the researcher to examine the enrollment rate of academic performance and the selected determinant factors.

Qualitative techniques – the results have been provided in the form of explanatory notes or measurements with a non-standard scale. The final data have been presented in the form of tables, graphs, and pie charts. Therefore, both methods complement each other in this study.

All FGD data have been translated into Bangla languages. A *Santal* community interpreter volunteered to transcribe and translate the *Santali* content into

Bangla. The transcribed texts were analyzed using thematic analysis, and themes were derived from the data. The exact meaning of the vocabulary used by the respondents was determined using Bangla language transcriptions. Finally, all of the data that had been analyzed was translated into English. In the focus groups, some challenges are encountered repeatedly. The researcher's interpretation of the FGD findings was guided by the study's main objective and document review.

### Findings of the study

**Table 2 : Gross enrollment rate of the children of Santal**

Age group	Number			
	School Goers	Not school goers	Total	Comment
5	12	3	15	* Shishu class is introduced at primary level since 2020
6-10	91	1	92	* 98.91%
10+	8	-	-	
Total	111	4	107	

Gross Enrollment Rate = Total Enrollment x100/Age group population  
 =111x100/107= 103.73%

Table 2 reveals that the gross enrollment rate of the children of *Santal* at the primary level is 103.73%. Nationally, the Gross enrollment rate is 104.90 (APSC,2020). The numerical figure indicates that the children of *Santal* are a little bit more advanced regarding GER than others nationally.

**Table 3: Net enrollment rate of the Children of Santal**

Age group	Status			
	School Goers	Not school goers	Total	Comment
5	12	3	15	*Shishu class has recently introduced at primary level since 2020
6-10	91	1	92	
Total	103	4	107	

Net Enrollment Rate= Age group population enrollmentx100/Age group population  
 103x100/107= 96.26%

The net enrollment rate of the children of *Santal* at the primary level is 96.26% and it is revealed in Table 3. Nationally, the Net enrollment rate is 97.37 (APSC,2020). It indicates that the children of *Santal* are a little bit lagging behind in comparison to the national statistics regarding NER.

**Figure 1: Comparative scenario of GER, NER of the Santal, and national statistics**

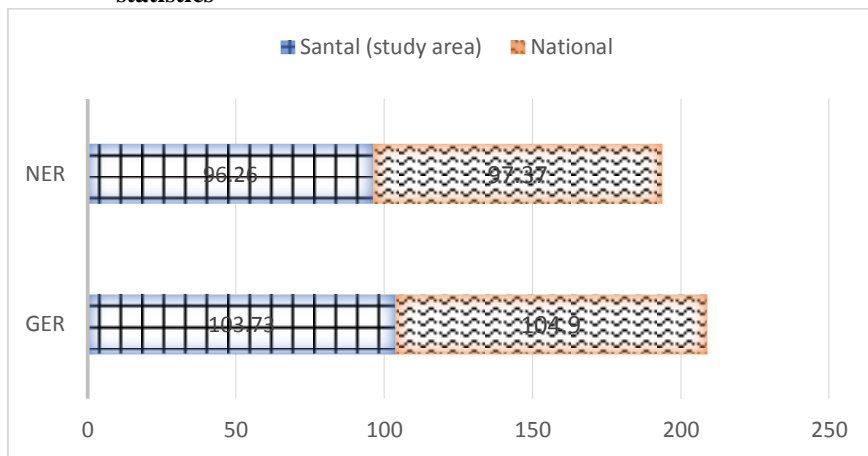


Figure 1 reveals that the gross enrollment rate and net enrollment between the children of *Santal* and national statistics at the primary level in Bangladesh are almost equal. In the case of NER, the children of *Santal* are a little bit behind the national statistics.

**Figure 2: Comparative scenario of PECE result, 2019 of Santal, others in study area and national statistics**

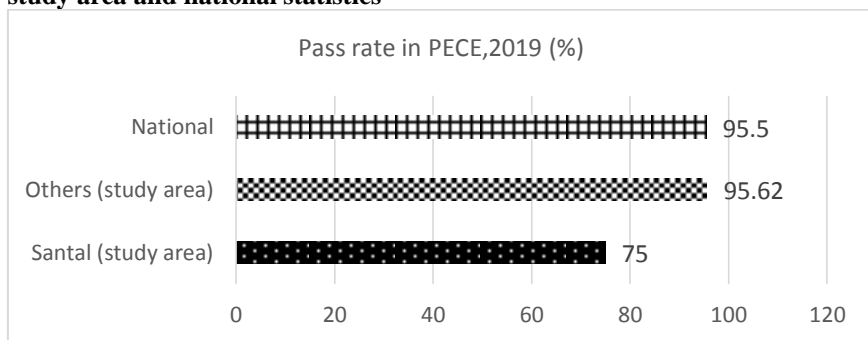


Figure 2 reveals that the pass rate in PECE held in 2019 of the students of *Santal* is 75%, on the other hand, the pass rate of the mainstreaming students in the study area is 95.62% and national statistics are 95.5%. It is reflected that the students of the *Santal* community are lagging in academic achievement compared to the mainstream students.

Primary Education Completion Examination (PECE) is a public examination meant for grade V students. The examination is conducted centrally and the scripts of examinees are evaluated by the external examiners.

**Figure 3: Comparison based on acquired marks held in 2019 between *Santal* and other students**

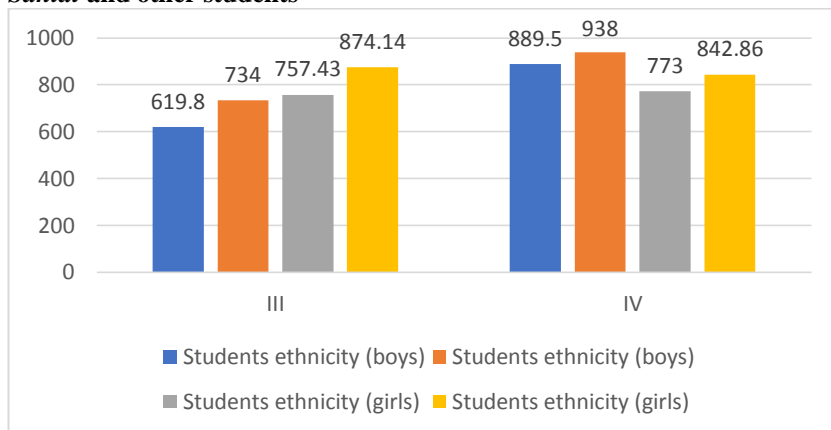


Figure 3 focuses on -

Class III: The *Santal* boys acquired 619.8 marks, on the other hand, the other students acquired 734 marks. It also discloses that the *Santal* girls acquired 757.43 marks, on the other hand, other students acquired 874.14 marks.

Class IV: The *Santal* boys acquired 889.5 marks, on the other hand, the other students acquired 938 marks. It also discloses that the *Santal* girls acquired 773 marks, on the other hand, other students acquired 842.86 marks. Based on the acquired marks, it can be said that the *Santal* students are lagging behind others.

**Table 4: Ordinal and categorical cognitive achievement status of the students of the *Santal***

Level	Score limit (%)	Achievement level
Below basic	Below 40%	Students are significantly unable to recognize aspects of familiar or simple content knowledge or phenomena
Basic	40% -59%	Students are able to identify moderately everyday content knowledge and basic procedural knowledge. They can identify a conclusion from a simple data set using basic knowledge
Proficient	60%-79%	Students use more complex and more abstract content knowledge, which is either provided or recalled to construct explanations of more complex and less familiar events and process
Advance	80% and above	Students describe new and more sophisticated phenomena using abstract scientific ideas or concepts. They can utilize more advanced cognitive knowledge to evaluate and justify alternative experimental designs, as well as employ theoretical knowledge to interpret the data or draw conclusions.

**Table 5: Numerical cognitive achievement status of the students of the Santal students in grade V**

Test	Administer year	Below basic	Basic	Proficient	Advance
Bangla	2022	29.41%	47.06%	14.71%	8.82%
English		67.65%	14.70%	17.65%	0%
Mathematics		73.53%	26.47%	0%	0%

*\*Note: Below shadow denotes below desired performance and gray shadow denotes desired performance*

Table 5 depicts the cognitive achievement of the *Santal* students as quite disappointing. Cognitive tests have revealed a very grim image of students from the *Santal* community's cognitive achievement. In terms of learning outcomes, they are greatly behind, particularly in English and Mathematics.

**Table 6: Numerical cognitive achievement status of the students of the Santal students in grade V**

Test	Administer year	Below basic	Basic	Proficient	Advance
Bangla	2022	29.41%	47.06%	14.71%	8.82%
English		67.65%	14.70%	17.65%	0%
Mathematics		73.53%	26.47%	0%	0%

*\*Note: Below shadow denotes below desired performance and gray shadow denotes desired performance*

Table 6 depicts the cognitive achievement of the *Santal* students as quite disappointing. Cognitive tests have revealed a very grim image of students from the *Santal* community's cognitive achievement. In terms of learning outcomes, they are greatly behind, particularly in English and Mathematics

**Table 7: Trend analysis between socio-economic factors of the Santal family and its effect on enrollment and academic achievement of their children**

Independent variables and its intrinsic characteristics		Dependent variables and its intrinsic characteristics	
Variables	Characteristics	Variables	Characteristics
Education qualification of family head	47% illiterate (adverse situation)	1. Enrollment rate 2. Cognitive achievement	1.1 Gross enrollment rate 103.73 1.2 Net enrollment rate 96.26% <b>(low enrollment)</b>

Independent variables and its intrinsic characteristics		Dependent variables and its intrinsic characteristics	
Variables	Characteristics	Variables	Characteristics
Family income	13017 Taka (adverse situation)		2.1 Pass rate in PECE Examination 75% <b>(low pass rate)</b> 2.2 Exposed cognitive achievement status of grade V students are as follows: <b>Bangla</b> -29.41 Below basic, 47.06 Basic, 14.71% proficient and 8.82% proficient <b>English</b> -67.65 below basic, 14.70 basic and 17.65% proficient, none is advanced. <b>Mathematics</b> - 73.53% below basic, 26.47% basic and none is in proficient and advanced level. <b>(Cognitive achievement status is low)</b>
Occupation of the family head	75%-day laborers (adverse situation)		
Education qualification of family members	28% illiterate (adverse situation)		
Occupation of the family members	51%-day labor (adverse situation)		
Bangla medium teaching-learning and textbooks	Fully exercised (adverse situation)		
Mother tongue-based teaching-learning	Fully absent (Highest adverse situation)		

The intrinsic characteristics of independent variables are severe in adverse situations and very appalling towards the same percent enrollment rate and quality scholastic achievement of the children of *Santal*. Based on data revealed in Table 7 the researcher can conclude in a way that the low level of socio-economic status of the *Santal* community is related to the low level of enrollment and scholastic development of their children. As a result, it can be said there is a positive association between a low level of socioeconomic status and a low level of enrollment and academic achievement.

**Table 8: Hypothesis testing the result of access to quality of primary education of the children of *Santal***

Areas	Santal	National	Others (study area)	Result	
Net enrollment rate	96.26%	97.37%	-	Supported	
PECE result, 2019	75%	95.5%	95.62%	Supported	
Acquired marks in grade III	619.8(boys) 757.43 (girls)	-	734 (Boys) 874.14(girls)	Supported	
Acquired marks in grade IV	889.5 (boys) 773 (girls)	-	938 (Boys) 842.86 (girls)	Supported	
Cognitive achievement status in grade V					
Subject	Below basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced	Result
Bangla	29.41%	47.06%	14.71%	8.82%	Supported
English	67.65%	14.70%	17.65%	0%	Supported
Mathematics	73.53%	26.47%	0%	0%	Supported

## Major findings

1. The gross enrollment rate of the *Santal* children is 103.73% and the net enrollment rate is 96.26%.
2. In the case of NER, the children of *Santal* are a little bit behind the national statistics.
3. The cognitive achievement (learning outcome) status of the students of the *Santal* is below desirable and frustrating. Cognitive tests have revealed a very bleak picture of the cognitive achievement of students from the *Santal* community. They are significantly behind in terms of learning outcomes, particularly in English and Mathematics.
4. The pass rate in PECE held in 2019 of the students of *Santal* is 75%, on the other hand, the pass rate of the mainstreaming students in the study area is 95.62% and national statistics are 95.5%. It is clearly reflected that the students of the *Santal* community are lagging behind in academic achievement compared to the mainstream students.
5. Not a single *Santal* student got a scholarship in PECE in 2019
6. In the terminal evaluation in class III in 2019, the *Santal* boys acquired 619.8 marks, on the other hand, the other students acquired 734 marks. The *Santal* girls acquired 757.43 marks, on the other hand, other students acquired 874.14 marks.
7. In the same year in class IV, the *Santal* boys acquired 889.5 marks, on the other hand, the other students acquired 938 marks. The *Santal* girls acquired 773 marks, on the other hand, other girls students acquired 842.86 marks. Based on the acquired marks, it can be said that the *Santal* students are lagging behind the others.
8. About 74.3% of teachers opined that there is none at home in the *Santal* household to help the children in learning. Illiteracy of the family head, as well as family members, is the major reason for not performing well in academic results. About 22.9% of teachers opined that textbooks published in the Bangla language and no one of the family members both make a negative impact on the academic results.
9. *Santali* is the fundamental language of communication for the children of *Santal*, and children begin learning it at a tender age. In school, there is a language barrier because the medium of teaching, the language of their textbooks is not their mother tongue.

Most of the teachers are different from their native tongue. As a result, the *Santal* students have difficulty following lessons and participating in class activities. The *Santal* children are not habituated to listening to the Bangla language at the very beginning of their lives. They face challenging

circumstances in school because they are unable to understand the teacher's instructions and textbooks, as well as engage with other students in Bangla. The majority of parents are illiterate about what they can do to help their children prepare for school. Parents, from ethnic communities, are not well-communicated by schools. Parents are unconcerned about this since they do not know how to support their kids.

## Conclusion

The children of *Santal* are a little bit lagging behind mainstreaming. A significant negative impact is found in the academic achievement of the students of the *Santal*. They are far behind that of mainstream students. Access to school is pleasant but the academic performance of the *Santal* students is very alarming. There are many justified reasons are there for not doing well in learning. Most of the parents are illiterate and their economic status is very crucial. They depend on mainly day-to-day labor. They cannot help their kids in learning about their illiteracy. Adult education programs for the *Santal* can make a better result for the learning of the kids. Literate parents may help their children in teaching in early grades. Special income-generating programs for the *Santal* (indoor/outdoor) can make change their shattered financial circumstances. All the students belonging *Santal* community can be under the purview of the stipend program.

In *Santal*-living areas, the native tongue, *Santali* should be a medium of instruction with a gradual transfer to Bangla. The tender-aged children of *Santal* cannot grasp the Bangla language. The school environment is disfavoring for the children of *Santal*. Concerning that the students of *Santal* face a Himalayan problem to understand the contents of the textbooks as well as the instruction of the teachers. In primary schools, there should be more *Santal*-speaking teachers. They should be deployed to their respective areas to provide educational assistance to *Santal* students who speak *Santali* at home, with a gradual transfer to Bangla.

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