SCIENTIFIC CULTURE
www.sci-cult.com

SCIENTIFIC CULTURE, Vol. 12, No. 4, (2026), pp. 10685-10691
Open Access. Online & Print

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.21263995

CULTURAL CONFIDENCE, PERCEIVED SOCIAL IDENTITY AND EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION AMONG TRIBAL STUDENTS IN GOA: A NARRATIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY

Aastha Govind Shirodker[a*], Saurabh Srivastava[b]

[a]Research Scholar, Sharda School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sharda University, India
[b]Assistant Professor, Sharda School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sharda University, India

Received: **16/12/2025**
Accepted: **16/03/2026**

Corresponding Author: Aastha Govind Shirodker (aasthashirodker@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

This study utilized a qualitative narrative methodology to examine the intersections of cultural confidence, perceived social identity and educational aspirations among tribal students in Goa, India. Students from the Gauda, Kunbi and Velip tribes offered diverse experiential insights. Descriptive statistics provided a contextual backdrop, revealing heterogeneity in family socioeconomic backgrounds and schooling characteristics. Thematic analysis identified four key patterns: cultural pride and identity affirmation, community connectedness and elders' influence, educational impact of cultural roots and gender and tribal variations in identity expression and perceived opportunity. Differences across tribes further accentuate textured nature of belongingness and opportunity. The findings highlight that educational aspirations among Goa's tribal youth are linked to indigenous identity or perceived social identity, a sense of purpose and the pursuit of social mobility. The study calls upon the stakeholders to promote culturally receptive educational policies and practices that respect and enhance the lived realities and strengths of tribal students, ascertaining equitable progress.

KEYWORDS: Aspiration, Cultural confidence, Education, Perceived Social Identity, Tribal youth

Copyright: © 2026. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License. (https://cre-ativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

INTRODUCTION

Identity plays a fundamental role in both individual and collective development, shaping one's internal self-concept and position within sociocultural frameworks (1). In the case of Indian milieu, where caste, tribe and class crucially shape lived experiences, the understanding and insight regarding social identity plays a particularly remarkable role in directing a person's aspirations, self-esteem and ultimate achievements (2). This concept underscores the complex relationship concerning personal identity and social structures in India. The caste system, tribal affiliations and socioeconomic class divisions create a complex interweaving of social identities that profoundly influence an individual's life trajectory.

These social categories often define and limit a person's access to resources, educational opportunities and social networks, which in turn shape self-perception and future possibilities. For instance, individuals from marginalized tribes may experience systemic barriers and discrimination, potentially restricting their aspirations or wear away their self-esteem (3). It influences how individuals perceive their abilities, set goals and traverse societal expectations. Moreover, it determines to a large extent, how they interact with others and position themselves within their communities and society. Contrarily, those from privileged backgrounds might benefit from better social capital and opportunities, strengthening their sense of self-worth and ambition. The interplay between these social identities and personal development is dynamic as well as multidimensional; and remains inadequately studied among tribal communities in Goa, particularly in the psychosocial context in connection with educational aspirations and attainments.

Understanding this relationship is essential for addressing social inequalities, promoting inclusive policies and nurturing individual empowerment in the Indian context. It highlights the need for interventions that look into material disparities and address the psychological and social dimensions of identity formation and self-actualization.

Educational achievements play a pivotal role in social mobility for indigenous individuals across the globe (4; 5). Indian tribal communities in Goa such as the Gauda, Kunbi and Velip experience complex socio-cultural and economic challenges that considerably impact their educational trajectories. Comprising about 12% of Goa's populace, they stay largely under-represented in contemporary educational psychology literature and broader research datasets in related fields.

The existing literature concerning Goa predominantly addresses resistance identities influence through economic as well as cultural pressures, with a special focus on the effect of tourism on local communities (6). This attention on resistance reveals the manner in which localized identities function as a structure of dissent against external economic influences. Previous studies have similarly investigated cultural resistance in Goa, particularly in response to colonial impositions (7), examining how cultural identity was maintained under external pressures.

While these studies provide valuable context for understanding the challenges Goan population faces, they do not comprehensively explore the educational aspirations or psychosocial origins specific to indigenous natives of the region. Quantitative analyses may have provided insights into academic motivation and well-being, but the qualitative sociocultural dimensions influencing educational aspirations remain underexplored for such communities (8). This creates a significant empirical gap in the understanding of individual and collective aspirations related to education and achievement among these groups.

To address this gap a narrative inquiry approach is proposed. This method aims to further understanding of how young Goan tribal students develop cultural confidence and social identity with respect to educational attainments and achievements. Narrative methods are ideal for this as they offer a broad view of personal experiences; allowing participants to share their views on identity, community and education within the context of their cultural settings (9; 10).

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to explore how cultural confidence and perceived social identity influence educational aspirations among tribal youth in Goa through a qualitative narrative inquiry.

Objectives

1. To examine the demographic and educational characteristics of the tribal youth within their socio-cultural contexts.
2. To identify and analyze thematic patterns within the narratives of the tribal youths, with a focus on cultural confidence, perceived social identity and educational aspirations.

Research Design

A qualitative narrative approach underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm was employed, acknowledging the subjective, constructed nature of

identity and educational experiences. Reflexivity was practiced by the researcher continuously reflecting on positionality and influence in data interpretation (11; 12; 13).

Participants and Locale

30 tribal youth aged 13 to 25 years from Gauda, Kunbi and Velip tribes across North and South regions of Goa, participated in this study.

Data Collection

Semi-structured questionnaires included open-ended questions capturing narratives about cultural identity, community connections and educational aspirations. Demographic data such as gender, age, educational qualifications, medium of instruction, type of school/ college enrolled in, parents' qualifications and occupation, income, etc. were collected for contextualizing the sample.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Ethical approval for the study was obtained at the departmental level at Sharda University as part of doctoral research; however no formal approval number was issued. Ethical approval for the study was granted as part of the doctoral research process. Formal approval for research work was issued on 21st May 2024 and subsequent institutional permission for fieldwork and data collection was granted on 03rd May 2025.

Written informed consent was taken from all the participants. As some participants were minors, written and verbal assent was obtained from all participants, and additionally, verbal informed consent was obtained from their parents/legal guardians as an extra precautionary measure prior to data collection. Verbal consent was considered appropriate given the contextual considerations and was obtained only after providing full information about the study, including the purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, and confidentiality. The consent process was documented through field notes and securely stored. The data collection was completed between second and fourth week of May 2025. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, and anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics summarize demographic characteristics. Narrative data were analyzed thematically, identifying recurrent themes concerning cultural pride, community ties and the influence of these factors on education. Participant voices were preserved through direct narrative excerpts, honoring their lived realities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics

The sample comprised 16 female and 14 male participants, primarily from the Gauda tribe (19 participants), with the remainder from Kunbi and Velip tribes. Educational levels ranged from 8th grade to postgraduate studies. Most participants hailed from South Goa, with a moderate representation from North Goa. Table 1 depicts the participants' sociodemographic characteristics including gender, tribe, region, area of residence and language of instruction.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Participant's Sociodemographic Characteristics (n=30)

Variable	Categories	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	16	53.3
	Male	14	46.7
Tribe	Gauda	19	63.3
	Velip	6	20.0
	Kunbi	5	16.7
Region	South Goa	18	60.0
	North Goa	12	40.0
Area	Rural	30	100.0

Table 2 summarizes educational background and schooling factors such as education level, medium of instruction and type of school attended by tribal youth.

Table 2 Educational and Instructional Characteristics of Participants (n=30)

Variable	Categories	Frequency	%
Education Level	12th Grade	10	33.3
	10th Grade	5	16.7
	11th Grade	4	13.3
	UG & PG	11	36.7
Medium of Instruction	English	30	100.0
Type of School	Aided	19	63.3
	Government	9	30.0
	Private	2	6.7

Table 3 presents familial socioeconomic profiles and educational support variables including parental education and occupation, family income and indicators of first-generation educational achievement. The demographic analysis reveals a unique group of tribal youth, primarily from rural areas, who are pursuing their education in English-medium schools. The Gauda tribe forms most of this cohort. These students are spread across various educational levels, with many attending aided schools. It is noteworthy

that a significant number of these students are pioneering learners in their families, having successfully completed both secondary and higher secondary education, thus contributing to the educational development of their households.

Table 3 Family Socioeconomic Profile and Educational Support Variables (n=30)

Variable	Categories	Frequency	%
Monthly Family Income (INR)	Not Known	15	50.0
	Various amounts (20,000 to 100,000 INR)	15	50.0
Father's Education	HSSC	7	23.3
	8th Grade	7	23.3
	Other/Unknown	16	53.4
Father's Occupation	Self Employed	6	20.0
	Driver	4	13.3
	Other	20	66.7
Mother's Education	SSC	8	26.7
	Not Known	6	20.0
	Other	16	53.3
Mother's Occupation	Housewife	17	56.7
	Other	13	43.3
First Generation Learner	No	28	93.3
	Not Applicable	2	6.7
First in Family to Complete Secondary/Higher Secondary	No	19	63.3
	Yes	8	26.7
	Not Applicable	3	10.0

The students' socioeconomic backgrounds are characterized by diversity, as evidenced by the varied educational qualifications and occupations of their parents. This diversity also reflects the complex livelihood patterns prevalent within their communities. A significant proportion of participants were unable to disclose their family income, suggesting potential economic uncertainties experienced by some families (14; 15; 16). The demographic analysis offers an insightful examination of a community endeavoring to harmonize its rich cultural heritage with aspirations for educational and social advancement. The data highlights the dynamic nature of tribal communities as they navigate the trajectories of modernization while preserving their distinct identity.

Thematic Findings

Analysis of the participants' responses and narratives, lead the researchers in identifying the following themes:

1. Cultural Pride and Identity Affirmation: Participants consistently acknowledged a profound pride in their tribal heritage, which constituted an essential aspect of their identity. The pride was evident even in contexts where societal perceptions might subject them to judgement for belonging to indigenous communities or being 'ST' or 'Adivasi'. For instance, a male participant stated that "I am proud to identify myself as a Gauda and keep our traditions alive." Females similarly embraced their tribal identities without hesitation or reservation. These narratives illustrate that embracing their indigenous identity contributed to their psychological resilience (17; 18). This sense of pride enhanced their self-esteem and provided motivation for their aspirations and educational pursuits, further underscoring the importance of cultural confidence in overcoming challenges (19; 20; 21)

2. Community Connectedness and Elders' Influence: The role of community and elders emerged as a prominent theme supporting youths' cultural and educational development. Many participants narrated the transmission of cultural values, norms and encouragement through guidance from the elder members of the tribe and communal networks. A female respondent noted, "Because of elders' support and values that they pass on to the younger generation, I understand how to live and pursue my goals." This indicates that the tribal community functions as an extended family, where learning and motivation are socially mediated through relational ties (22; 23; 24). Particularly for female participants, strong community embeddedness fostered a sense of belonging and accountability, fortifying their educational engagement (25). This communal scaffolding was viewed as essential for navigating educational pathways and supporting motivation (26).

3. Educational Impact of Cultural Roots: The participants linked their educational pursuits closely with cultural values and aspirations toward community upliftment. Education was not merely a personal advancement but a means for preserving

and enhancing tribal welfare. Participants frequently cited scholarships, concessions and cultural support as facilitators enabling their academic journeys (27). For instance, a participant from the Velip tribe shared, "Education is affordable for me because of scholarships meant for Scheduled Tribes." This practical support, combined with cultural pride, is a catalyst for commitment to academic success (28; 29). In some cases, the male participants expressed more ambivalence with respect to cultural influence on educational goals (30; 31), hinting at potential gendered dynamics in identity negotiation. Nevertheless, the predominant narrative integrated education with cultural continuity and social responsibility, reinforcing the vital role of indigenous identity in motivating education.

4. Gender and Tribal Variations in Identity Expression and Perceived Opportunity: The study revealed indirect yet significant variations in how gender and tribal membership intersect with cultural confidence and educational motivation. Female participants described deeper engagement with community networks and elder influences, often expressing education as a shared endeavor rooted in collective identity (32). Whereas, males sometimes exhibited ambivalence or lesser emphasis on cultural impact regarding their goals, possibly reflecting differing social expectations or identity expressions (33; 34). Additionally, tribal distinctions were clear: Gauda youth valued their traditions and heritage as central to who they are and what they aim for; Kunbi respondents highlighted the importance of social relations and belongingness, while Velip youth focused on the educational opportunities facilitated by provisions such as scholarships and other aides. These differences highlight the need for educational policies and support systems that carefully consider both gender-specific and tribal needs.

This study reveals that cultural confidence nurtures resilience and educational motivation among tribal youth (35; 36; 37; 38). The findings highlight the significance of culturally grounded pedagogies that acknowledge and incorporate indigenous students and their identities. The study's interpretivist lens advocates for policy and practice centered on indigenous perspectives, attentive to gendered and tribal-specific experiences.

Limitations

Though this study was the first of its kind to attempt an exploration of the educational aspirations, cultural identity, perceived social identity and indigenous culture and how it manifests in tribal youth of Goa, it was not without certain restrains. The small sample size of this study may be discussed as a limitation to the generalizability of results itself. Secondly, the authors consider that the limited time duration of the conduct of this study and limited observational data has also restricted the elucidation of some behaviors and narratives.

Future Research Directions

Aligning with the implications of findings of this study as well as the limitations, future studies can explore or focus on the following-

- Understanding the dynamics of gendered nuances of perceived social identity in tribals in Goa.
- As this study focused mainly on indigenous students, future studies could explore other age groups and non-student groups.
- Generational perspectives towards identity, educational mobility and social mobility amongst these tribes can be investigated.
- Psychological factors such as student motivation, drive, aspiration and achievement need to be studied in relation to teacher's motivation as well as formal mentorship.
- Studies with longitudinal design may aid in obtaining more varied data and deeper insights into other related constructs.
- Many participants highlighted that their culture, art forms, folklore and indigenous heritage significantly influence their aspirations and the support they perceive in pursuing their goals. In this context, examining mental preparedness to set higher educational objectives aligned with upward social mobility may yield valuable insights.

CONCLUSION

Cultural confidence and perceived social identity significantly influence educational aspirations among Goa's tribal communities. These factors foster a sense of belonging and self-worth, motivating individuals to pursue academic goals. Education systems should adopt culturally responsive approaches that respect and integrate tribal traditions, languages and knowledge systems. This strategy promotes equity, inclusion and empowerment by creating a learning environment that resonates with students' cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the tribal youth, community elders and local educational authorities for their valued cooperation and insights. Gratitude is extended to colleagues and mentors who guided this research through suggestions, advice and their experiences.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests: The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Funding: No financial support was received from any organization/agency for this study.

Data Availability: The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. Due to confidentiality and ethical restrictions, the data is not publicly available.

Ethical Consideration: This study was approved by the University and written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Cultural protocols and confidentiality were rigorously maintained. This research adhered to the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Participants took part willingly, provided informed consent, and their information was kept strictly confidential.

Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all participants and, where applicable, from their legal guardians.

REFERENCES

Vågan A. Towards a sociocultural perspective on identity formation in education. Mind Cult Act. 2011; 18(1): 43–57. doi: 10.1080/10749031003605839

Goghari VM, Kusi M. An introduction to the basic elements of the caste system of India. Front Psychol. 2023; 14. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1210577

Rana DK. Quality education for underrepresented groups: bridging the gap. Int J Engl Lit Soc Sci. 2024; 9(1): 212–219. doi: 10.22161/ijels.91.28

Boyden J. 'We're not going to suffer like this in the mud': educational aspirations, social mobility and independent child migration among populations living in poverty. Compare. 2013;43(5): 580–600. doi: 10.1080/03057925.2013.821317

Prout Quicke S, Biddle N. School (non-)attendance and 'mobile cultures': theoretical and empirical insights from Indigenous Australia. Race Ethn Educ. 2016; 20(1), 57–71. doi: 10.1080/13613324.2016.1150831

Routledge, P. "Selling the rain", resisting the sale: resistant identities and the conflict over tourism in Goa. Soc Cult Geogr. 2001; 2 (2), 221–240. doi: 10.1080/14649360120047823

Axelrod P, Fuerch MA. Flight of the Deities: Hindu Resistance in Portuguese Goa. Mod Asian Stud. 1996; 30 (2): 387–421. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026749x00016516

Kao G, Tienda M. Educational aspirations of minority youth. Am J Educ. 1998; 106(3): 349–384. doi: 10.1086/444188

Hammack PL. Narrative and the cultural psychology of identity. Pers Soc Psychol Rev. 2008; 12(3): 222–247. doi: 10.1177/1088868308316892

Mclean KC. The emergence of narrative identity. Soc Personal Psychol Compass. 2008; 2(4): 1685–1702. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00124.x

Kohl E, Mccutcheon P. Kitchen table reflexivity: negotiating positionality through everyday talk. Gender Place Cult. 2014; 22(6): 747–763. doi: 10.1080/0966369x.2014.958063

Mosselson J. Subjectivity and reflexivity: locating the self in research on dislocation. Int J Qual Stud Educ. 2010; 23(4): 479–494. doi:10.1080/09518398.2010.492771

Sveinson K, Melton N, Delia E, Dalal K, Cunningham G. Rethinking rigor: using positionality and reflexivity to enhance sport management scholarship. J Sport Manag. 2025; 39(2): 79–89. doi: 10.1123/jsm.2024-0155

Ghosh S. Impact of economic growth volatility on income inequality: ASEAN experience. Qual Quant. 2020;54(3): 807–850. doi: 10.1007/s11135-019-00960-z

Oyadeyi OO, Ibukun CO, Arogundade S, Oyadeyi OA, Biyase M. Unveiling economic resilience: exploring the impact of financial vulnerabilities on economic volatility through the economic vulnerability index. Discover Sustain. 2024; 5(1). doi: 10.1007/s43621-024-00438-5

Wu LL. Effects of family instability, income and income instability on the risk of a premarital Birth. Am Sociol Rev. 1996; 61(3): 386. doi: 10.2307/2096355

Chua RY, Yasin S, Kadirvelu A, Choudhry FR., Park MS. The cultural, family and community factors for resilience in Southeast Asian indigenous communities: a systematic review. J Community Psychol. 2019; 47(7): 1750–1771. doi: 10.1002/jcop.22224

Wexler L. Looking across three generations of Alaska Natives to explore how culture fosters indigenous resilience. Transcult Psychiatry. 2013: 51(1):73–92. doi: 10.1177/1363461513497417

Gonzalez LM, Huq N, Stein, GL. The influence of cultural identity and perceived barriers on college-going beliefs and aspirations of Latino youth in emerging immigrant communities. Hisp J Behav Sci. 2012; 35(1): 103–120. doi: 10.1177/0739986312463002

Lowe K, Tennent C, Moodie N, Guenther J, Burgess C. School-based Indigenous cultural programs and their impact on Australian Indigenous students: a systematic review. Asia Pac J Teach Educ. 2020; 49(1): 78–98. doi: 10.1080/1359866x.2020.1843137

Park LE, Crocker J, Kiefer AK. Contingencies of self-worth, academic failure and goal pursuit. Pers Soc Psychol Bull. 2007;33(11): 1503–1517. doi: 10.1177/0146167207305538

Rupavath R. Tribal education: a perspective from below. South Asia Res. 2016; 36(2), 206–228. doi: 10.1177/0262728016638718

Slavin RE, Chamberlain A, Hurley EA. Cooperative learning and achievement: theory and research. 177–198. doi: 10.1002/0471264385.wei0709

Urrieta L. Familia and comunidad-based saberes: learning in an indigenous heritage community. Anthropol Educ Q. 2013; 44(3): 320–335. doi: 10.1111/aeq.12028

Snowden LR. Social embeddedness and psychological well-being among African Americans and whites. Am J Community Psychol. 2001;29(4):519–536. doi: 10.1023/a:1010480816822

Morgan K, Van Godwin J, Darwent K, Fildes A. Formative research to develop a school-based, community-linked physical activity role model programme for girls: CHARMING. BMC Public Health. 2019;19(1). doi:10.1186/s12889-019-6741-1

Good A, Sims L, Russo FA, Clarke K. Indigenous youth reconnect with cultural identity: the evaluation of a community- and school-based traditional music program. J Community Psychol. 2020;49(2): 588–604. doi:10.1002/jcop.22481

Lin S, Mastrokoukou S, Longobardi C, Bozzato P. The influence of resilience and future orientation on academic achievement during the transition to high school: the mediating role of social support. Int J Adolesc Youth. 2024; 29(1). doi: 10.1080/02673843.2024.2312863

Rios-Ellis B, Torres A, Inzunza-Franco G, Bellamy L, Galvez G, Rascón M. Creating a model of Latino peer education. Educ Urban Soc. 2012; 47(1): 33–55. doi: 10.1177/0013124512468006

Hartas D. Young people's educational aspirations: psychosocial factors and the home environment. J Youth Stud. 2016; 19(9): 1145–1163. Doi: 10.1080/13676261.2016.1145634

Lundberg S. Educational gender gaps. Southern Econ J. 2020; 87(2): 416–439. doi: 10.1002/soej.12460

Beutel AM, Axinn WG. Gender, social change and educational attainment. Econ Dev Cult Change. 2002; 51(1), 109–134. doi: 10.1086/345517

Enaifoghe A. The influence of culture and gender differences in communication: society's perception. Int J Res Bus Soc Sci. 2023; 12(7): 460–468. doi:10.20525/ijrbs.v12i7.2720

Granié MA, Varet F, Torfs K, Vanlaar W, Woods-Fry H, Evennou M, et al. Effect of culture on gender differences in Risky Driver Behavior through Comparative Analysis of 32 Countries. Transp Res Rec. 2020; 2675(3): 274–287. doi: 10.1177/0361198120970525

Donovan D. Healing of the canoe: preliminary results of a culturally tailored intervention to prevent substance abuse and promote tribal identity for Native youth in two Pacific Northwest tribes. Am Indian Alsk Native Mental Health Res. 2015; 22(1): 42–76. doi: 10.5820/aian.2201.2015.42

Heid O, Smith S, Harris C, Horse ML, Hill LD, Jacobs B, et al. Indigenous youth and resilience in Canada and the USA: a scoping review. Advers Resil Sci. 2022;3(2): 113–147. doi:10.1007/s42844-022-00060-2

Kahn CB. American Indian Elders' resilience: sources of strength for building a healthy future for youth. Am Indian Alsk Native Ment Health Res. 2016; 23(3): 117–133. doi: 10.5820/aian.2303.2016.117

Shea H, Baldwin D, Rousmaniere K, Mosley-Howard GS, Ironstrack G, Schroer JE. Cultural revitalization as a restorative process to combat racial and cultural trauma and promote living well. Cultur Divers Ethnic Minor Psychol. 2019; 25(4): 553–565. doi: 10.1037/cdp0000250