

## Learning Crisis among Tribal Girls: A Study of KGBVs of Jharkhand

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### *Abstract*

*This study examines the academic performance of tribal girls in two Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) schools in Jharkhand, India. The results show that the students' mean scores in Hindi, English, and mathematics are low, indicating a significant learning crisis. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions and support to address the educational challenges faced by tribal girls with the help of different evaluation reports of KGBV, including cultural and linguistic barriers, social marginalization, and inadequate educational infrastructure. The findings underscore the importance of improving the quality of education and promoting inclusive learning environments to bridge the educational gap and empower marginalized vulnerable scheduled tribe (ST) girls' students.*

**Keywords:** *Learning crisis, Tribal education, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)*

### **Background**

The learning crisis in Indian schools is a complex problem that affects many different demographic groups, especially those that are more vulnerable like scheduled tribes. Numerous research studies have highlighted the severity of this crisis, which points to a lack of quality education. A significant 86.8% of people aged 14 to 18 are currently enrolled in school, but still, there is a concern that some youth struggle to read, and more than half of students struggle with basic division problems, which sadly makes it more difficult for them to perform everyday calculations (ASER,2023).

There are significant differences and difficulties when it comes to the educational standing of India's Scheduled Tribes. Mehta (2013) discovered that there is inadequate educational infrastructure, a greater dropout rate, and lower enrolment rates among Scheduled Tribes. Saxena (2014) noted that the main obstacles to tribal education were cultural incongruence, language hurdles, and limited access to high-quality education. According to Pratham's Annual Status of Education Report (2020), only 22.4% of Scheduled Tribe students in Class III in rural areas were able to read a text from Class I, and only 35.4% of students in Class

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VIII were proficient in basic math. Furthermore, Scheduled Tribe kids experience social marginalization, prejudice, and discrimination in the classroom, which lowers their self-esteem and increases absenteeism and poor academic performance (Singh & Mishra, 2017).

Tribal students face significant learning crises, including limited access to quality education, cultural and linguistic barriers, and a lack of representation in the curriculum. The reports highlight the need for culturally responsive education that acknowledges and values tribal cultures, languages, and knowledge systems. To address these disparities, UNESCO recommends training teachers to be sensitive to tribal cultures and providing inclusive learning materials that reflect tribal students' experiences and perspectives (UNESCO, 2020). This has resulted in alarming dropout rates, with many tribal students failing to complete primary school. For instance, in India, the dropout rate among tribal students is as high as 70% (UNESCO, 2017) to address this problem, a special program KGBV was initiated in the year 2004.

### **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme**

In August 2004, the Indian government introduced the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) initiative, which aims to establish upper primary residential schools for girls who mostly belong to the SC, ST, OBC, and minority groups residing in challenging locations. The program was applicable in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs), where the gender gap in literacy is greater than the national average of 21.59% and the rural female literacy rate is lower than the national average (46.13%) (Census, 2001)

By providing holistic education, including academic, vocational, and life skills training, KGBV seeks to bridge the gender gap in education and improve the socio-economic status of girls (Government of India, 2020). KGBV has been implemented in rural and disadvantaged areas, showing a significant impact in increasing girls' enrolment and retention, improving academic performance, and enhancing gender equality (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2004). By empowering girls through education, KGBV contributes to the overall development of the country, aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality Education (UNESCO, 2018).

### **Evaluation of KGBV Scheme**

Since the inception of this scheme several rounds of evaluation of this program have been conducted. A study examining the implementation of the KGBV scheme in Muslim-concentrated districts across four Indian states found that while the scheme has been well-

received, improvements are needed in infrastructure, curriculum, and teacher training (Department of Women's Studies, National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2010-2013). Recommendations include streamlining admissions, providing separate rooms for vocational education and sports, regular health check-ups, and increasing teacher salaries. The study suggests enriching the curriculum, training girls in adolescent about social issues, and involving parents and the community in management decisions. With improvements, the KGBV scheme can better serve marginalized groups and provide quality education to disadvantaged girls.

A national evaluation of the KGBV scheme, conducted by the Department of School Education and Literacy, assessed the scheme's objectives, infrastructure, enrolment, retention, learning quality, and community perception across 12 states (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2010). The evaluation recommended that the government revisit the scheme's vision, extend it to urban areas and up to 10th standard, and provide a dedicated budget for teacher training and infrastructure development. The evaluation also suggested providing incentives for trained teachers, introducing child participation mechanisms, and clarifying partnership issues with NGOs. The study highlighted the need for a holistic approach to teaching, incorporating gender and social context into training modules, and providing life skills training.

The Programme Evaluation Division of NITI Aayog conducted an evaluation study of the KGBV scheme, which found that while the scheme has potential, improvements are needed in management, infrastructure, and teacher training (NITI Ayog, 2019). The study recommended separate national-level management, strict student eligibility guidelines, and an extension of KGBV up to classes X and XII. Additionally, the study suggested linking KGBV with other secondary education programs, tracking the progress of girls after completion, and providing better facilities for students with special needs. The study also highlighted concerns regarding security, computer proficiency, and teacher job satisfaction. The study's findings and recommendations aim to improve the scheme's effectiveness in promoting girls' education and empowerment.

The National Consultation on the KGBV scheme, held in 2008, aimed to identify issues, evolve solutions, and suggest recommendations for the scheme's effective implementation. The consultation emphasized the need for a gender-sensitive approach, inclusive of girls with disabilities, and community mobilization programs. It also recommended using NCERT textbooks, science and math kits, and reserving seats in Navodaya Vidyalayas for KGBV girls. Additionally, the consultation stressed the importance of teacher training, capacity

building, and addressing service conditions. It also highlighted the need for health insurance, nutrition, and hygiene facilities, as well as financial management and partnership strategies (NIE, NCERT, 2008).

The National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) evaluation reports on KGBVs highlighted several concerns, including inadequate infrastructure, poor teacher training, and insufficient community involvement (NIEPA, 2011). The reports also noted that KGBVs lacked functional libraries, science labs, and computer facilities, hindering the quality of education. Additionally, the reports emphasized the need for improved teacher recruitment, retention, and training, as well as stronger community engagement and participation. The evaluation also highlighted issues with student enrolment, retention, and dropout rates, particularly among Muslim girls.

For the present study the researchers focused on two KGBV schools in the districts of Gumla and Lohardaga located in rural, tribal areas with high enrolment rates of tribal girls who had previously dropped out of primary education. These schools provide a safe and supportive environment for girls who have been affected by Naxalism, human trafficking, and other vulnerable circumstances. The KGBV program offers residential facilities, education, and nutrition to help these girls rebuild their lives and reintegrate into mainstream society. The research aims to understand the experiences and outcomes of these girls in the KGBV program.

### **Research Procedure**

The academic progress of tribal girls studying at two Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) schools in Gumla and Lohardaga districts of two blocks was evaluated using achievement tests in three core subjects - Hindi, English, and Mathematics. Achievement tests were administered to 90 students of grades VI-VIII of these two schools in April 2024 which is one-third of enrolled students. Achievement test items were based on the entire content students were supposed to have studied by March 2024. Each test paper consisted of open-ended supply-type questions and the researcher refrained from making selection-type questions, and it allowed students to demonstrate their learning in reading and problem-solving (numeracy skills) skills and comprehension. With a total of 20 marks allocated to each test paper, the achievement tests provided a comprehensive measure of the students' subject-specific knowledge and comprehension. Each correct answer was awarded 1 mark and there was no negative marking for the wrong answers. Through the administration of these tests, the researcher aimed to assess the student's progress and understanding in these

subjects, identifying areas of strength and weakness to inform future instruction and support. All the answer sheets were evaluated as per the scoring scheme and mean scores for all three subjects grade and school wise were calculated.

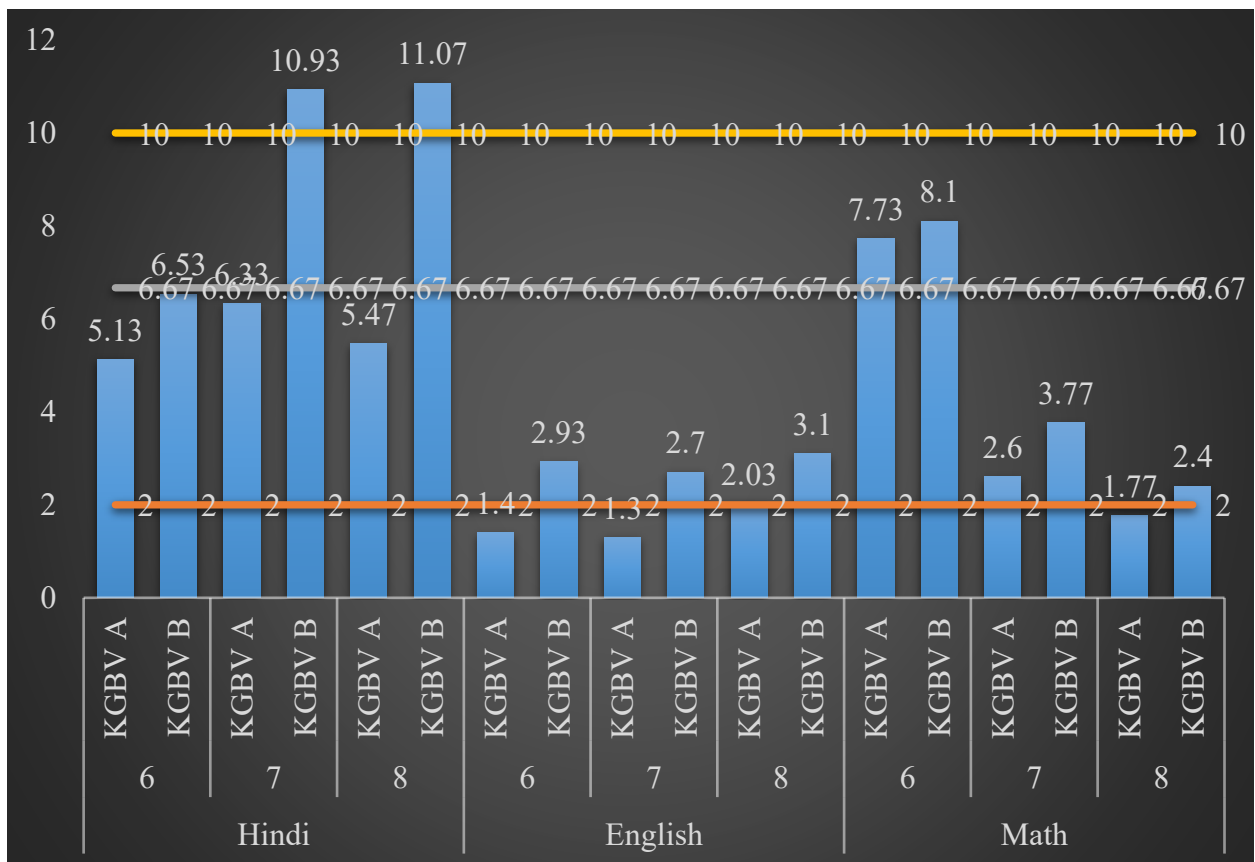
**Sample Description-**

**Table 1: Test Administered on tribal girls in KGBVs**

School	No. of Tribal Girls			Total
	VI	VII	VIII	
KGBV A	15	15	15	45
KGBV B	15	15	15	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>90</b>

**Study Findings**

Figure 1 provides a comparative status of the academic performance of tribal girls of both the KGBVs across grades and subjects.

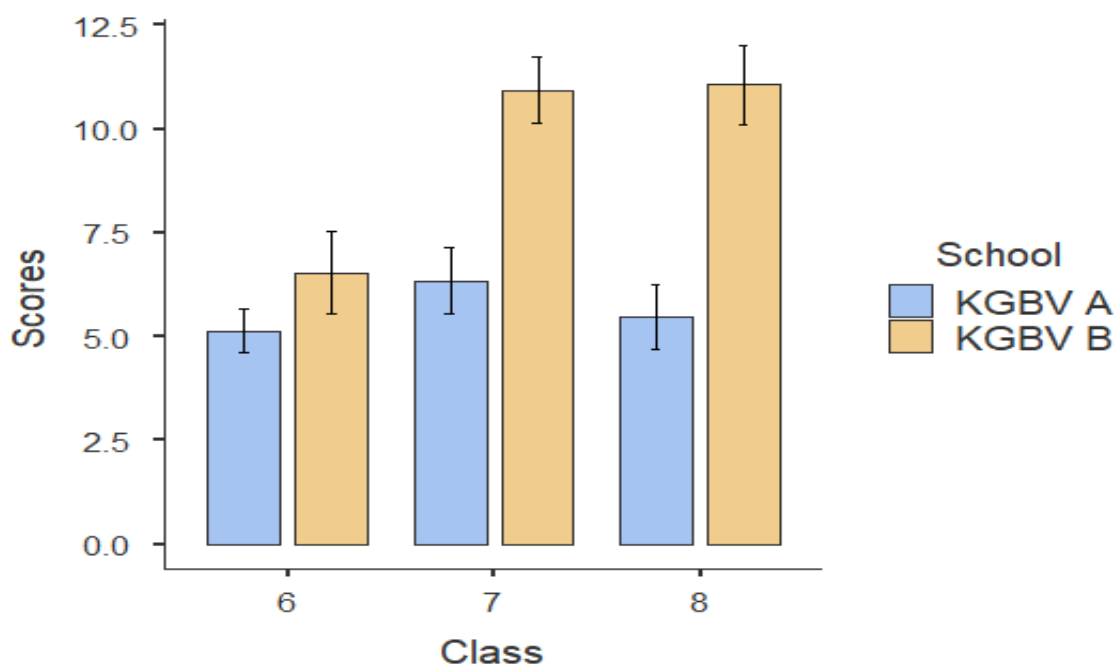


**Figure 1: Comparative Mean Achievement Score across Subjects, Grades, and Schools.**

This bar chart (figure 1) compares the students' performance in Hindi, English, and Math for classes 6, 7, and 8 of two schools KGBV- A and KGBV- B, the horizontal lines represent 10%, 33%, and 50% marks. With the help of these benchmark percentage performance lines, tribal girls' academic performance on achievement tests in Hindi, English, and Mathematics across grades is shown in both the KGBVs.

The researcher further analysed these test performance scores subject and grade-wise and attempted a comparison between both KGBVs

### Academic Performance in Hindi –



**Figure 2: Mean Achievement Score in Hindi**

The bar chart (Fig.2) shows the mean scores of tribal girls in the Hindi subject from two different Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), labeled as School A and School B, across three different class levels (6, 7, and 8). The achievement test had a maximum score of 20 marks and the highest score obtained by girls in School B was less than 60% (which equals 12 marks). Interpretation of the results in terms of learning levels and performance comparison shows that:

## Overall Learning Levels

- The overall scores indicate poor learning levels in both schools, especially for KGBV A, where the scores are consistently lower across all classes compared to KGBV B.
- As the students move to higher classes (Class 7 and Class 8), the difference between the schools becomes more apparent, with KGBV B students outperforming KGBV A students.

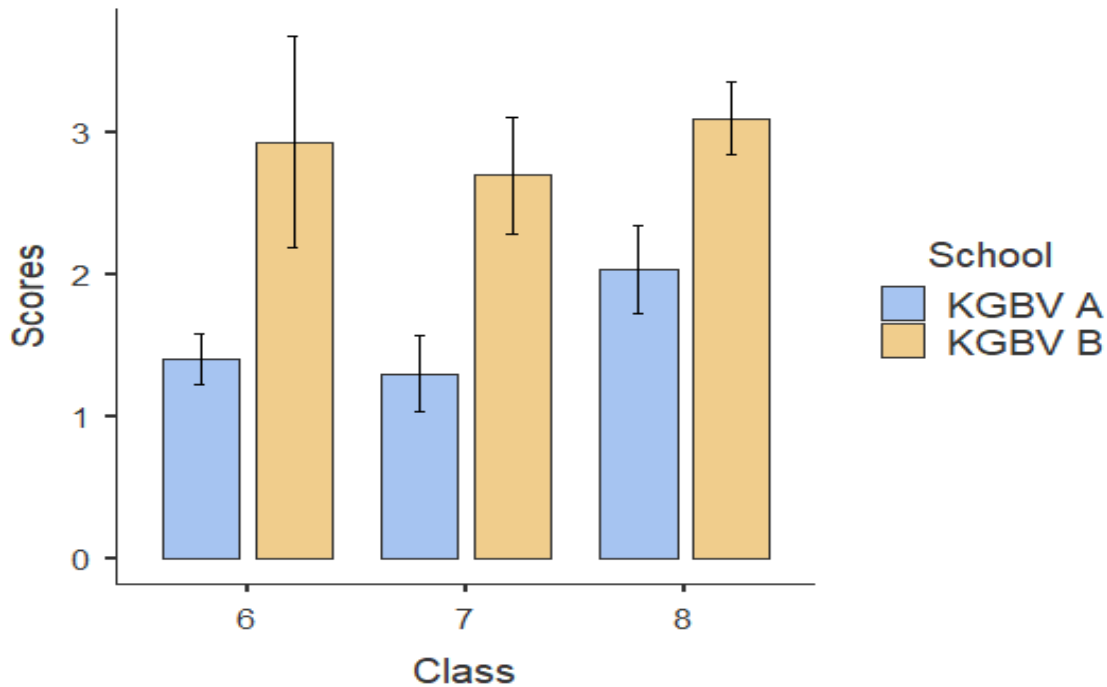
## Class-Level Comparisons

- **Class 6:** In both schools, the scores are below 60%, which is concerning because it reflects that even at a lower grade level, students are not mastering the material. KGBV A students, in particular, seem to be scoring very low, likely around 30-40% of the total marks.
- **Class 7:** The gap widens in Class 7, with KGBV B students performing better, but still not close to full achievement. With the highest scores in School B capped at 60% (approx.), students in KGBV A are likely to achieve much less than 50%.
- **Class 8:** By Class 8, the trend continues, and the gap between the two schools becomes larger. Even though School B students score higher than School A, they still don't surpass the 60% mark. This indicates severe underachievement, especially for students in School A, where the average could be as low as 30-40% of the total marks.

## Broader Implications

- Both schools are facing a significant **learning crisis**, but the situation is notably worse in School A. With no students reaching even 60% proficiency in Hindi, this points to serious gaps in foundational learning, teacher effectiveness, curriculum delivery, or learning support systems.
- The disparity between the two schools suggests that while School B is performing relatively better, it still requires interventions to boost student performance significantly above 60%. School A, on the other hand, requires even more focused remedial efforts to bring students up to an acceptable level of proficiency in Hindi.

### Academic Performance in English-



**Figure 3: Mean Achievements Score in English**

The bar chart (Fig.3) shows the mean scores of tribal girls from two Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV), labeled as School A and School B, in English across three different class levels (6, 7, and 8). The achievement test had a total of 20 marks, and the maximum score achieved by any student was only around 3 marks. It is evident from Fig 3 that there was an overall learning crisis in English in both the sampled KGBVs.

- The maximum score obtained is around 3 out of 20 (15%), which is alarmingly low. This indicates an **extreme learning crisis** in English proficiency for tribal girls in KGBV A and KGBV B.
- Even the best-performing students are far from achieving basic proficiency in English, which reflects serious gaps in foundational English learning across both schools.

### Comparison Between Schools

- **KGBV A** consistently shows lower scores in English compared to KGBV B across all classes.

- **Class 6:** KGBV A's average score is slightly above 1 mark out of 20, while KGBV B performs better, with an average close to 3 marks. However, this still represents only about 15% of the total marks, indicating a crisis in both schools.
- **Class 7:** The gap between the schools narrows slightly, but KGBV B still performs better, achieving an average of around 2.5 marks, while KGBV A remains just above 1.5 marks.
- **Class 8:** The trend is consistent, with KGBV B outperforming KGBV A, but both schools still show extremely poor performance. KGBV B students average around 3 marks, while KGBV A students average around 2 marks.

### **Performance Across Grades**

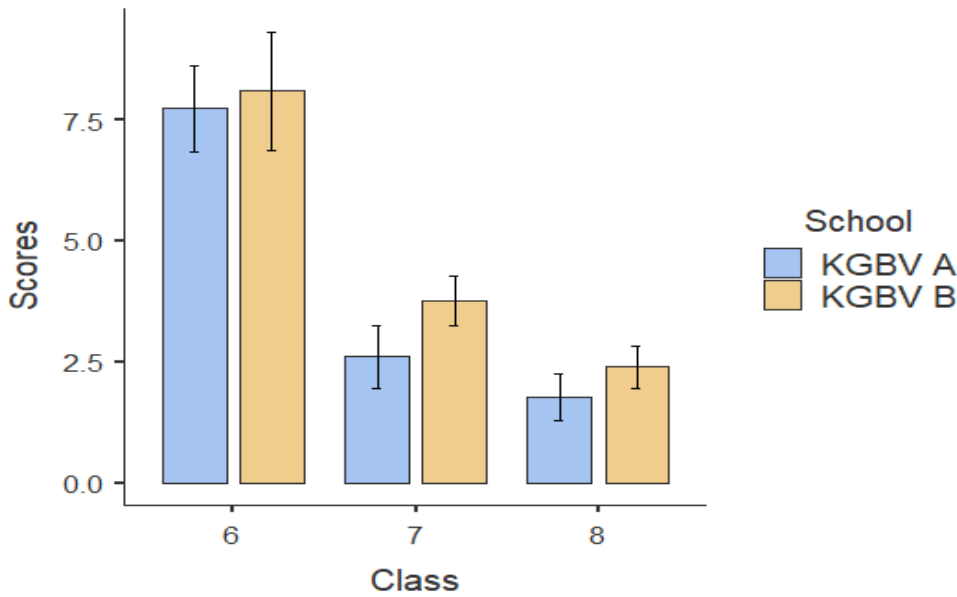
The performance does not improve significantly as student's progress through the grades, indicating that there is no substantial development of English language skills over time in either school.

This lack of improvement suggests that interventions to improve English learning have not been effective, and there is a critical need to address the root causes of this underachievement.

### **Key Observations**

- **Severe Underperformance-** Both schools are struggling with English language teaching and learning, but KGBV B students are marginally performing better than those in KGBV A. Despite this, the overall level of achievement is extremely low in both schools.
- **Consistent Gap Between Schools-** Throughout all the classes, KGBV B outperforms KGBV A, but neither school shows scores that approach even basic proficiency.
- **Stagnant Learning Growth-** There is very little difference in English performance as students progress from Class 6 to Class 8. This suggests that the teaching methods or learning environments in both schools are not effectively supporting students in improving their language skills as they advance through the school system.

## Academic Performance in Mathematics-



**Figure 4: Mean Achievement Scores in Mathematics**

The bar chart (fig. 4) depicts the mean scores in Mathematics for tribal girls from KGBV A and KGBV B in Classes 6, 7, and 8, measured on a 20-mark achievement test. The highest score achieved in Class 6 was around 8 marks, but the scores significantly dropped in Classes 7 and 8.

### Overall Learning Levels

- **Class 6:** Both schools perform relatively better in Class 6, with scores approaching 8 out of 20 marks, representing around 40%. This is still quite low but is the highest among the classes shown.
- **Classes 7 and 8:** There is a dramatic decline in performance from Class 6 to Classes 7 and 8. The mean scores in both schools drop below 5 marks out of 20 (25%), indicating a **severe learning crisis** in Mathematics in the higher grades.

### Comparison between Schools

- **Class 6:** KGBV A and KGBV B perform almost equally in Class 6, with both schools achieving around 7.5 to 8 marks. This suggests that while students in Class 6 are still

struggling, the gap between the schools is minimal, and they are performing relatively better.

- **Class 7:** In Class 7, both schools show a significant drop in performance. KGBV A students perform slightly better than KGBV B students, but both groups are far from mastering the subject, with scores hovering around 3 to 4 marks out of 20 (around 15-20%).
- **Class 8:** In Class 8, both schools are performing poorly, with the scores dropping even further, around or below 3 marks, indicating that students are scoring less than 15% of the total marks. Neither school shows improvement or higher achievement at this level.

### Learning Gaps across Grades

- The drastic drop in performance from Class 6 to Classes 7 and 8 suggests a **significant issue with the retention and progression of mathematical skills**. It indicates that as students advance to higher grades, they struggle more with Math, possibly due to insufficient foundational skills, poor teaching methodologies, or a lack of adequate support systems.
- The consistently low performance in Classes 7 and 8 across both schools highlights an urgent need for remedial efforts and targeted interventions to address the declining math skills as students advance.

### Broader Implications

- The results suggest that **KGBV students are falling behind in math skills, particularly in Classes 7 and 8**. The fact that the maximum score even in Class 6 was only 8 marks out of 20 points to deeper educational challenges, as this is far below what should be expected at any grade level.
- While there is less variation between the two schools, both are performing poorly in higher grades, signaling that the issue is widespread and systemic, not isolated to a particular school.

## Conclusion

In summary, the learning crisis is evident across both schools, with School A performing significantly worse than School B in all the subjects, i.e., Hindi, English, and Mathematics.

The study findings show alarmingly poor learning levels in English among tribal girls in both KGBV A and KGBV B. The highest score in any class is only around 15% of the total marks, and the consistent gap between the schools highlights the need for urgent intervention, particularly in KGBV A, where the performance is even worse. Both schools require significant improvements in English teaching methodologies, additional resources, and targeted remedial programs to address the severe learning deficiencies that exist.

The study findings highlight a critical learning crisis in Mathematics, particularly in higher grades. While Class 6 shows relatively better performance, the scores for both KGBV A and KGBV B drop significantly in Classes 7 and 8. This indicates a severe lack of mathematical proficiency among tribal girls, especially as they progress to higher grades.

Despite the positive impact of the KGBV scheme on enrolment and retention of tribal girls, present study findings of two KGBV schools in Jharkhand reveal low academic performance among tribal girls, underscores the need for urgent, systemic targeted interventions and support in both schools to address this educational gap.

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