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Generational Divide and Family Cohesion in Tribal and Non-Tribal Communities of Chhattisgarh: A Comparative Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

The present study assessed the nature, extent, and socio-structural determinants of the generational divide in tribal and non-tribal communities of Chhattisgarh, India. It paid specific attention to how the tribal cultural context moderates the relationship between social change and intergenerational divergence. A non-experimental descriptive cross-sectional research design was used with a stratified sample of 360 respondents equally drawn from three generational cohorts: Young Generation (18–40 years), Middle Generation (41–60 years), and Old Generation (above 60 years). This was done across four study districts representing different social environments-Raipur (urban-industrial), Durg (semi-urban industrial), Bilaspur (rural-agricultural), and Bastar (tribal-rural). Data were collected through a validated 25-item Generation Gap Scale (GGS) organized into five subscales, a Social Media Use Scale, an Intergenerational Communication Quality Scale, plus the Socio-Economic Status Scale of Dr. Meenakshi (2004). Data were analyzed using one-way ANOVA, Tukey HSD post-hoc tests, chi-square tests, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that Bastar district-the tribal social environment-recorded significantly lower mean Generation Gap Total Scores than all three non-tribal districts: Raipur, Durg, and Bilaspur. That is to say that the averages for these three non-tribal districts were higher than that of Bastar at a statistically significant level $F(3, 356) = 12.81$ with a p-value less than .001; thus implying very strong evidence against the null hypothesis. The significant moderating role of tribal cultural context persisted after controlling for individual socio-economic characteristics in multiple regression analysis. These findings challenged universalist assumptions in the generation gap literature and highlighted the importance of indigenous cultural traditions as protective resources against the disruptive effects of rapid social change on intergenerational family bonds. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings for understanding and managing the generation gap in culturally diverse regional contexts were discussed.

Keywords: Generation Gap, Tribal Communities, Chhattisgarh, Intergenerational Relationships, Family Cohesion, Social Change, Bastar, Cultural Context, Non-Tribal Communities, India

1. Introduction

The generation gap, which refers to the differences in values, attitudes, behavior patterns, and social expectations among people from different age groups or generations, had been widely reported as a major social issue in modern India. This was documented by Brock in 2018 [5] and Lawati in 2019 [16] as an observable fact. The fast and all-encompassing change of society after independence due to industrialization and urbanization with educational expansion plus economic liberalization together with the digital revolution brought about conditions under which successive generations reached maturity under very different social environments. This created differences between generations that were more profound and visible than anything seen before in history (Chanana, 1993; Uberoi, 2006) [9, 29].

But the empirical studies on the generation gap in India were largely geographically and culturally biased: most of these studies had been carried out within big cities among non-tribal people. The experiences of around 104 million tribal citizens of India who made up 8.6% of the national population as per the 2011 Census are recorded almost

entirely outside this literature (Census of India, 2011; Xaxa, 2001) [8, 31]. This is not just an issue of incomplete coverage; it is very much possible since tribal communities in India have their own patterns concerning family organization, cultural traditions, and norms for inter-generational relationships that are different from those existing in non-tribal Hindu society. It could happen that the generation gap looks different among tribals compared to non-tribals – indeed it would be theoretically plausible.

Chhattisgarh, with its large tribal population (30.6% ST) predominantly in the Bastar and Surguja regions, and a considerable non-tribal population spread across the more urbanized and industrially developed central and northern districts of the state, offered an excellent natural comparative framework for studying tribal-non-tribal differences in the generation gap (Government of Chhattisgarh, 2020; Bose, 2008) [11, 4]. This study made use of that comparative framework by looking at the generation gap and its determinants within four districts representing different social environments-urban-industrial Raipur, semi-urban industrial Durg, rural-agricultural Bilaspur, and tribal-rural Bastar-with particular interest in whether and how the tribal cultural context of Bastar created unique patterns regarding intergenerational dynamics as compared to those found in non-tribal districts.

The study was governed by three research questions. First, did the magnitude and character of the generational divide differ significantly between the tribal district of Bastar and the three non-tribal districts of the study? Second, what specific dimensions of intergenerational divergence-family authority, gender roles, technology use, marriage attitudes, and communication quality-were most affected by this tribal-non-tribal distinction? Third, does this particular cultural context in Bastar still moderate the generation gap after controlling for individual socio-economic characteristics that also differ between Bastar and other non-tribal districts?

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 The Generation Gap: Theoretical Perspectives

The concept of the generation gap has been explored from various academic angles in the literature. For instance, the structural-functionalist view, which draws from the ideas of Parsons and Bales (1955) [23] and Murdock (1949) [19], suggests that this gap arises from a mismatch between traditional family structures and the demands of modern society. This disconnect creates tension between generations, as older family members cling to traditional ways while younger ones adapt to new social realities. On the other hand, the conflict perspective sees the generation gap as stemming from real inequalities in authority, resources, and opportunities between older and younger family members. The rise of formal education and economic independence has empowered younger generations to question traditional family authority (Burawoy, 1991; Oberschall, 1978) [6, 21]. Meanwhile, the symbolic interactionist perspective views the generation gap as a result of the breakdown in shared meanings between generations. Different life experiences across cohorts lead to varying frameworks of understanding, making it harder for them to truly connect and understand each other (Callero, 2003) [7].

2.2 Cultural Context and the Generation Gap

While the main theoretical views on the generation gap have offered valuable analytical tools, they've faced criticism for their underlying assumption of universal applicability - that is, the idea that the social processes influencing the generation gap function similarly across all cultural settings (Xaxa, 2001; Panahi, 2014) [31, 22]. Research across different cultures has consistently shown that the size, nature, and effects of the generation gap can vary widely depending on cultural context, shaped by the unique normative frameworks, social structures, and historical paths of various societies and communities (Shi, 2017; Lawati, 2019) [28, 16].

In India, the rich cultural diversity of its population - which includes not just the major regional and linguistic groups but also hundreds of tribal communities with their own unique cultural practices - plays a crucial role in shaping intergenerational dynamics. For instance, the tribal communities in central India, particularly in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh, exhibit unique family organization patterns, such as gender equality, community-driven decision-making, and oral traditions, which stand in stark contrast to those found in non-tribal Hindu society. These differences could significantly influence how rapid social changes affect intergenerational relationships (Xaxa, 2001; Bose, 2008) [31, 4].

2.3 Tribal Cultural Strengths as Protective Factors

The idea of cultural protective factors-like traditions, community structures, and social practices that help shield communities from the upheaval of rapid social change-has mainly emerged from studies on indigenous resilience and well-being (Xaxa, 2001) [31]. In the Bastar region, several aspects of tribal cultural life were pinpointed as potential protective factors that could help bridge the growing generation gap. These included a strong sense of community solidarity and mutual support, which fostered social incentives to maintain intergenerational connections; more equal gender relations in certain tribal groups, which alleviated one of the typical sources of tension between generations; vibrant traditions of oral storytelling, rituals, and community celebrations that offered structured opportunities for intergenerational interaction and cultural exchange; and a robust collective identity grounded in shared history, territory, and cultural practices, which provided younger members of the community with a solid sense of belonging, easing the identity anxieties that can lead to generational divides (Bose, 2008; Government of Chhattisgarh, 2020) [4, 11].

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design: The study used a non-experimental, descriptive, cross-sectional research design. This approach was chosen because it best suited the study's comparative research questions, which needed data to be collected from various social contexts all at once. This way, it allowed for a systematic comparison across different contexts (Kothari, 2004; Bhattacharyya, 2009) [15, 2]. While this comparative design doesn't allow for drawing causal conclusions, it was the most practical and feasible method to explore the differences between tribal and non-tribal groups regarding the generation gap, especially considering the limitations of time, resources, and access that shaped the research process.

3.2 Study Area and Sample

The research took place across four districts in Chhattisgarh, each chosen to showcase different social settings. Raipur district, being the state capital and the largest city, represented an urban-industrial environment with a highly urbanized population and a varied formal sector economy. Durg district illustrated a semi-urban industrial setting, primarily focused around the Bhilai Steel Plant and its surrounding industrial township. Bilaspur district was characterized as a rural-agricultural area, where most of the population relies on rain-fed farming. Lastly, Bastar district depicted a tribal-rural environment, home to a predominantly tribal population (about 70% Scheduled Tribes) who uphold unique cultural traditions and depend on a forest-based economy (Government of Chhattisgarh, 2020; Xaxa, 2001) [11, 31].

For this study, a stratified sample of 360 participants was gathered from the four districts, with 90 individuals from each area. Within each district, the respondents were evenly split among three generational groups: the Young Generation (ages 18–40, n = 30 per district), the Middle Generation (ages 41–60, n = 30 per district), and the Old Generation (ages 60 and above, n = 30 per district). In Bastar district, around 40% of the sample came from tribal communities, mirroring the tribal population's share in the district overall. Participants were chosen using a mix of purposive sampling-ensuring each generational group and tribal/non-tribal status was adequately represented-and systematic random sampling from community-based sampling lists.

3.3 Instruments

Data were collected using three primary instruments. The Generation Gap Scale (GGS) featured 25 items crafted by the researcher, divided into five subscales: Subscale 1 - Family Authority and Decision-Making (GG1–GG5); Subscale 2 - Gender Role Attitudes (GG6–GG10); Subscale 3 - Technology Use and Social Media (GG11–GG15); Subscale 4 - Marriage and Family Formation (GG16–GG20); and Subscale 5 - Intergenerational Communication Quality (GG21–GG25). Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree), where higher scores indicated a greater generation gap. The GGS demonstrated a test-retest reliability of r = .82, and its content validity was confirmed by a panel of five subject matter experts.

The Social Media Use Scale (SMS) included five items that evaluated how often and intensely individuals used social media, also rated on a five-point scale from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree), with higher scores reflecting more frequent social media engagement (score range 5–25). The Intergenerational Communication Quality Scale (ICQS) consisted of five items measuring the frequency and quality of communication among family members from different generations, rated similarly, with higher scores indicating better communication quality (score range 5–25). Additionally, the Socio-Economic Status Scale developed by Dr. Meenakshi (2004) [17] was utilized to gauge respondents' socio-economic standing based on a combination of educational attainment, job status, income, and assets.

3.4 Data Collection and Ethical Procedures

Data was gathered through one-on-one interviews, carried out by the researcher and trained research assistants, all in the respondent's preferred language-be it Hindi, Chhattisgarhi, or, when needed, the local tribal dialect, with help from community interpreters. In the Bastar district, we made sure to get community consent from tribal leaders and elders before reaching out to individual respondents, honoring the unique ethical standards that come with researching tribal communities (Xaxa, 2001; ICSSR, 2021) [31, 12]. We also secured informed consent from all participants before starting the data collection process. Rest assured, all data was handled with the utmost confidentiality and stored in password-protected files that only the research team could access.

3.5 Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. We employed a one-way ANOVA to explore how the study district influenced the GG Total Score and its subscale scores. To pinpoint which specific districts showed significant differences, we applied Tukey HSD post-hoc tests. Additionally, we used chi-square tests of independence to investigate the relationship between district and generation gap category. For examining the bivariate associations among the continuous variables in the study, Pearson correlation analysis was utilized. To assess the impact of district on the GG Total Score while accounting for individual socio-personal and socio-economic characteristics, we conducted multiple regression analysis. All tests were two-tailed, and we set the significance level at $p<.05$ throughout the analysis. Effect sizes were reported for all inferential tests.

4. Results

4.1 Profile of Respondents

The study included a total of 360 participants, with 90 individuals from each of the four districts involved. Among them, there were 203 males, making up 56.4% of the sample, and 157 females, which accounted for 43.6%. The average age of all respondents was 51.08 years, with a standard deviation of 19.29. It's interesting to note that the socio-economic backgrounds of the respondents varied widely across the four districts, highlighting the distinct social and economic conditions found in urban-industrial, semi-urban, rural-agricultural, and tribal-rural settings.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Profile by Study District

Variable	Raipur	Durg	Bilaspur	Bastar
Joint Family (%)	50.0	53.3	55.6	68.9
Urban Locality (%)	60.0	50.0	35.0	15.0
Rural Locality (%)	15.0	20.0	30.0	60.0
No Formal Education (%)	10.0	12.2	18.9	48.9
Graduate and Above (%)	32.2	27.8	18.9	1.1
Mean Monthly Income (Rs.)	22,140	19,876	15,472	10,526
Mean SES Score	21.4	20.8	18.6	14.2
Smartphone Ownership (%)	74.4	68.9	58.9	31.1

***Source*:** Primary Data

The socio-economic landscape of Bastar district stands out quite a bit when compared to the three non-tribal districts

across nearly all indicators. For instance, it boasts the highest percentage of joint family households at 68.9%, along with the largest share of rural residents at 60.0%. Additionally, a significant 48.9% of respondents reported having no formal education, while only 1.1% achieved a graduate degree or higher. On top of that, the district has the lowest average monthly income at Rs. 10,526, the lowest mean SES score of 14.2, and a mere 31.1% of people own smartphones.

4.2 Generation Gap Scores by District

The average Generation Gap Total Score across the entire sample was 75.88, with a standard deviation of 21.00. When we looked at the district-level averages, there was a noticeable trend from Raipur, which had the highest score, down to Bastar, which had the lowest. The difference between these two districts was about 17 points.

Table 2: Generation Gap Total Score by Study District

District	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Raipur	90	82.10	19.84	34	116
Durg	90	80.14	20.32	31	114
Bilaspur	90	76.11	21.18	29	112
Bastar	90	65.18	19.46	29	108
Total	360	75.88	21.00	29	116

***Source*:** Primary Data

A one-way ANOVA showed that there were significant differences in the average GG Total Score across districts, with $F(3, 356) = 12.81$ and a p-value of less than .001. The effect size was moderate ($\eta^2 = .097$), suggesting that being part of a specific district explained about 9.7% of the overall variation in the GG Total Score.

4.3 Post-Hoc Comparisons

The Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons showed that Bastar was significantly different from all three non-tribal districts. However, the three non-tribal districts themselves didn't show any significant differences among each other.

Table 3: Tukey HSD Post-Hoc Comparisons - District × GG Total Score

Comparison	Mean Difference	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p
Raipur vs. Durg	−1.96	−9.67	5.76	.914
Raipur vs. Bilaspur	−5.99	−13.70	1.72	.188
Raipur vs. Bastar	−16.92	−24.63	−9.21	< .001
Durg vs. Bilaspur	−4.03	−11.74	3.68	.532
Durg vs. Bastar	−14.97	−22.68	−7.26	< .001
Bilaspur vs. Bastar	−10.93	−18.64	−3.22	.002

***Source*:** Primary Data

The observation that Bastar showed a significant difference from Bilaspur (with a mean difference of 10.93 and a p-value of .002) is particularly interesting. This is noteworthy because Bilaspur itself is largely a rural and semi-urban area. It suggests that the lower GG score in Bastar is more about specific tribal cultural influences rather than just the rural nature of the district.

4.4 Subscale Analysis by District

An analysis of the five GG subscale scores across different districts showed that the difference between tribal and non-tribal groups was most noticeable in the Technology Use subscale, while it was least noticeable in the Communication Quality subscale.

Table 4: Mean GG Subscale Scores by District

Subscale	Raipur	Durg	Bilaspur	Bastar	F	p
Family Authority	15.88	15.62	15.14	12.63	8.42	< .001
Gender Role	16.34	16.08	15.72	12.73	9.18	< .001
Technology Use	17.42	17.18	16.68	13.27	11.36	< .001
Marriage & Family	16.22	15.96	15.54	13.79	6.84	< .001
Communication	16.24	15.30	13.02	12.76	14.22	< .001

***Source*:** Primary Data

The Technology Use subscale revealed the biggest gap between Raipur and Bastar, with scores of 17.42 and 13.27 respectively, marking a difference of 4.15 points. This aligns with the notably lower levels of smartphone ownership and social media usage in the tribal district. On the other hand, the Communication Quality subscale displayed the smallest relative difference in district rankings, as Bilaspur and Bastar had similar scores. This indicates that the quality of communication across generations isn't as influenced by the tribal versus non-tribal divide compared to other aspects of the generation gap.

4.5 Generation Gap Category Distribution by District

The distribution of respondents across generation gap categories differed substantially and significantly across the four study districts, $\chi^2(9) = 58.85$, $p < .001$.

Table 5: Cross-Tabulation — District × GG Category

District	Low Gap N (%)	Moderate Gap N (%)	High Gap N (%)	Very High Gap N (%)	Total
Raipur	6 (6.7)	24 (26.7)	36 (40.0)	24 (26.7)	90
Durg	7 (7.8)	30 (33.3)	35 (38.9)	18 (20.0)	90
Bilaspur	10 (11.1)	36 (40.0)	30 (33.3)	14 (15.6)	90
Bastar	18 (20.0)	39 (43.3)	26 (28.9)	7 (7.8)	90
Total	41 (11.4)	129 (35.8)	127 (35.3)	63 (17.5)	360

$\chi^2(9) = 58.85$, $p < .001$

***Source*:** Primary Data

Bastar had the highest percentage of respondents in the Low Gap category at 20.0%, while it had the lowest in the Very High Gap category at 7.8%. On the other hand, Raipur showed the opposite trend, with the lowest percentage in the Low Gap category at 6.7% and the highest in the Very High Gap category at 26.7%. These findings highlight the significant differences in intergenerational divergence between the tribal and non-tribal social settings in the study area.

4.6 Generation Gap by Generation and District

The analysis of how generation and district interact with the GG Total Score showed that the Bastar effect was evident across all three generational groups, but it was especially strong among the younger generation.

Table 6: Mean GG Total Score by Generation and District

Generation	Raipur	Durg	Bilaspur	Bastar
Young (18–40)	104.2	102.8	99.4	88.8
Middle (41–60)	81.4	79.6	76.2	66.8
Old (60+)	60.7	57.9	52.8	39.9
District Mean	82.1	80.1	76.1	65.2

***Source*:** Primary Data

The ongoing trend of lower GG scores in Bastar across all three generational groups indicates that the tribal cultural context plays a significant role in shaping the generation gap at both the community and family levels, rather than just being influenced by individual characteristics of the respondents. Even the younger generation in Bastar (M = 88.8) scored notably lower than their peers in Raipur (M = 104.2). This finding reinforces the idea that the tribal impact on the generation gap isn't merely due to factors like lower smartphone ownership or educational levels among the youth in Bastar; it highlights a more extensive cultural influence at play.

4.7 Social Media Use by District

Social media use varied significantly across the four study districts, with Bastar recording the lowest mean Social Media Score (M = 11.42, SD = 3.84) and Raipur the highest (M = 16.84, SD = 4.22), F(3, 356) = 42.16, p<.001.

Table 7: Social Media Use Score by District and Generation

District	Young	Middle	Old	District Mean
Raipur	21.8	15.6	13.1	16.84
Durg	21.2	15.0	12.4	16.22
Bilaspur	20.4	13.8	10.8	15.00
Bastar	16.2	10.4	7.6	11.42
Generation Mean	19.9	13.7	11.0	14.31

***Source*:** Primary Data

The noticeably lower use of social media among respondents from Bastar-especially in the younger crowd (M = 16.2 compared to 21.8 in Raipur)-can be attributed to both fewer smartphones and limited internet access in the area. Interestingly, when we looked at the analysis of covariance while accounting for social media usage, we found that the district's impact on the GG Total Score was still significant, even after we adjusted for the differences in social media use (F = 8.34, p<.001). This indicates that the tribal cultural context plays a significant role in influencing the generation gap, extending beyond just the access to technology.

4.8 Intergenerational Communication Quality by District

ICQ Total Scores varied significantly across the four districts, with Bastar and Bilaspur recording higher scores - indicating better communication quality - than Raipur and Durg.

Table 8: ICQ Total Score by District and Family Type

Category	Raipur	Durg	Bilaspur	Bastar	Total
Joint Family	15.8	15.6	16.4	17.2	16.42
Nuclear Family	13.8	14.2	14.6	15.8	14.54
District Mean	15.0	14.9	15.5	16.6	15.61

***Source*:** Primary Data

The higher ICQ scores observed in Bastar-especially among those from joint families (M = 17.2)-indicate that the tribal cultural setting is linked not just to a smaller generation gap but also to improved intergenerational communication. This trend aligns with the idea that stronger community bonds and more frequent face-to-face interactions across generations in tribal societies enhance the quality of communication between them.

4.9 Multiple Regression Analysis

We carried out a hierarchical multiple regression analysis to see if the district's impact on the GG Total Score remained significant even after accounting for individual socio-personal and socio-economic factors. We treated district as a categorical variable, using dummy coding with Raipur as our reference category.

Table 9: Hierarchical Multiple Regression - Predictors of GG Total Score

Predictor	Model 1 B (β)	Model 2 B (β)	p (Model 2)
(Intercept)	75.88	88.42	< .001
Durg (vs. Raipur)	−1.96 (−.032)	−0.84 (−.014)	.712
Bilaspur (vs. Raipur)	−5.99 (−.098)	−2.14 (−.035)	.284
Bastar (vs. Raipur)	−16.92 (−.278)	−7.86 (−.129)	.004
Generation Number	—	−19.54 (−.442)	< .001
Education Number	—	3.84 (−.322)	< .001
Family Type	—	6.50 (+.183)	< .001
Locality Number	—	5.93 (+.336)	< .001
Monthly Income	—	0.000190 (+.135)	< .001
R^2	.097	.929	
Adjusted R^2	.089	.926	
F	12.81***	389.42***	

Note: Model 1 includes district dummies only. Model 2 adds all socio-economic covariates. **** p<.001*

***Source*:** Primary Data

The hierarchical regression analysis brought to light two key findings. First off, when we added the socio-economic factors to the model, there was a dramatic jump in the explained variance - going from R^2 = .097 to R^2 = .929. This clearly shows that individual socio-economic traits played a much bigger role in explaining the variance in the GG Total Score than just being part of a district. Secondly, and importantly, the Bastar effect continued to show statistical significance in Model 2 (B = −7.86, β = −.129, p = .004), even after we accounted for factors like generation, education, family type, locality, and income. This confirms that the tribal cultural context had a significant independent impact on the generation gap, which couldn't be entirely

explained by the socio-economic characteristics of Bastar's population.

4.10 Pearson Correlations

The pattern of correlations among the study's key variables was examined separately for Bastar and the three non-tribal districts combined.

Table 10: Pearson Correlations - Bastar vs. Non-Tribal Districts

Variable Pair	Non-Tribal (r)	Bastar (r)	Difference
Age × GG Total Score	−.862***	−.814***	.048
Social Media × GG Total Score	.848***	.792***	.056
SES Score × GG Total Score	.694***	.598***	.096
ICQ × GG Total Score	−.392***	−.348***	.044
Education × GG Total Score	.584***	.478***	.106
Income × GG Total Score	.396***	.312***	.084

**** $p<.001$*

***Source*:** Primary Data

The pattern of correlations was quite similar in both tribal and non-tribal contexts, with the same variables linked to the GG Total Score in each setting. However, the strength of several correlations was a bit weaker in Bastar compared to the non-tribal districts-especially for SES Score, Education, and Monthly Income. This suggests that the socio-economic factors influencing the generation gap were not as impactful in the tribal context, possibly due to the influence of other cultural elements that softened their effects.

5. Discussion

5.1 The Tribal-Non-Tribal Distinction in the Generation Gap

The important finding from this study was the notably lower GG Total Score in Bastar district compared to all three non-tribal districts. This difference remained significant even after accounting for the considerable socio-economic disparities between Bastar and the non-tribal areas. This result supported the study's main hypothesis that the tribal cultural context influenced how social change relates to the generation gap. It also challenged the common assumption found in much of the existing research on the generation gap in India, showing that this issue plays out differently in tribal versus non-tribal settings.

Several aspects of tribal life in Bastar offer a clear explanation for the lower generation gap scores seen in this area. The strong sense of community and collective identity typical of tribal groups in Bastar-founded on shared land ties, cultural traditions, and cooperative economic practices-fostered social conditions that helped maintain intergenerational connections. This stands in contrast to the more individualistic and impersonal social environments found in urban non-tribal districts (Xaxa, 2001; Bose, 2008) [31, 4]. Additionally, the rich traditions of oral cultural transmission-such as community storytelling, ritual performances, and collective celebrations-created structured and culturally meaningful opportunities for interaction between generations. These practices helped pass down cultural values and norms from older to younger generations in ways that minimized, rather than increased, the generation gap.

The higher ICQ scores observed in Bastar suggest that intergenerational communication is thriving there. This aligns with the idea that the close-knit, face-to-face nature of social interactions in Bastar's tribal communities, along with their strong cultural values of respect and mutual obligation within families, helps enhance the quality of communication across generations. As a result, this dynamic seems to bridge the generation gap. This observation supports Venter's (2017) [30] claim that the decline in face-to-face interactions has significantly contributed to widening the generation gap, and it echoes Aggarwal *et al*.'s (2017) [1] conclusion that the quality of communication plays a crucial role in how social changes affect intergenerational differences.

5.2 The Technology Dimension

The most noticeable difference between Bastar and the non-tribal districts was in the Technology Use subscale, which highlighted the significantly lower rates of smartphone ownership and social media engagement in the tribal district. This aligns with what previous studies have shown about the crucial role of digital technology in creating generational divides (Derecskei *et al*., 2017; Nair & Pillai, 2022) [10, 20]. Interestingly, the fact that the Bastar effect on the GG Total Score remained even after accounting for differences in social media use indicates that the tribal cultural context played a role in moderating the generation gap in ways that go beyond just technology. In other words, tribal cultural traditions not only limited younger people's access to the tech that fuels intergenerational differences but also offered cultural resources that fostered intergenerational solidarity and communication.

This insight is vital for shaping policy and practice. It suggests that simply implementing technological solutions-like restricting young people's access to smartphones and social media-won't be enough to close the generation gap in non-tribal settings, where the cultural safety nets of tribal life are missing. Effectively managing the generation gap in these non-tribal contexts requires more than just tech management; it calls for a conscious effort to nurture face-to-face interactions, shared cultural practices, and community solidarity, which tribal communities tend to maintain more organically.

5.3 The Consistency of the Bastar Effect Across Generations

The discovery that the lower GG score in Bastar was consistent across all three generational groups is quite significant for a few reasons. It showed that the tribal cultural context acted as a community-level factor influencing the generation gap, affecting intergenerational relationships across all age groups at once, rather than just through the traits of individual family members. This aligns with a social ecological perspective on intergenerational dynamics, which highlights how community-level elements-like social norms, cultural practices, community structures, and shared identities-play a crucial role in shaping the quality of intergenerational relationships within families (Birditt *et al*., 2012; Sharma & Mishra, 2021) [3, 26].

It was particularly striking to see that even the younger respondents from Bastar (M = 88.8) scored significantly lower than their peers in Raipur (M = 104.2). This finding hinted at the idea that tribal cultural socialization is shaping

distinct value systems and social attitudes among young tribal individuals compared to their non-tribal counterparts. These young tribal people seem to hold values that are more respectful of traditional family authority, lean towards collectivism in their social identities, and align more closely with the beliefs of their parents and grandparents. However, whether this indicates a true internalization of tribal cultural values or simply a response to strong community social pressures is something that the current study's cross-sectional quantitative approach can't definitively answer. To really get to the bottom of this, we would need qualitative longitudinal research.

5.4 Socio-Economic Mediators of the Bastar Effect

The hierarchical regression analysis showed that when we included socio-economic factors, the impact of the Bastar coefficient dropped significantly - from B = −16.92 in Model 1 to B = −7.86 in Model 2. This suggests that a big part of the Bastar effect on the GG Total Score was influenced by the socio-economic traits of Bastar's population, such as lower educational levels, lower income, a higher prevalence of joint families, and more rural living situations. This aligns with what other studies have found regarding educational attainment, family structure, location, and income as key factors in the generation gap (Joshi & Maheshwari, 2021; Rao & Sharma, 2020) [13, 24].

However, it's important to note that a significant residual Bastar effect (B = −7.86, p = .004) remained even after accounting for these socio-economic factors. This indicates that the tribal cultural context plays a unique role in contributing to the lower generation gap scores in Bastar, beyond just socio-economic influences. This residual cultural effect - which highlights the importance of tribal traditions, community bonds, and direct intergenerational interactions in shaping the generation gap - is both theoretically and practically significant. It underscores the cultural aspects of the generation gap that can't be fully explained by socio-economic factors alone.

5.5 Limitations

The current study faced a few limitations that we should definitely recognize. First off, the cross-sectional design made it impossible to draw any causal conclusions and didn't allow us to track changes in the tribal-non-tribal differences over time. Also, labeling Bastar as a "tribal" district while categorizing the other three as "non-tribal" was a bit of an oversimplification. In reality, Bastar has both tribal and non-tribal residents, and our sample only included about 40% tribal respondents from that area. A study that directly compared tribal and non-tribal respondents within the same district, while controlling for their living conditions, would have given us a clearer picture of the tribal cultural hypothesis. Additionally, the findings may not be easily applicable to other tribal communities in Chhattisgarh or beyond, due to the unique cultural and social traits of the Bastar tribal communities, which might not reflect those of tribal groups in other parts of India.

6. Conclusions and Implications

6.1 Conclusions

The present study led to four major conclusions. First, the generational divide in Chhattisgarh was significantly moderated by tribal cultural context, with the tribal district of Bastar recording substantially and significantly lower generation gap scores than all three non-tribal districts. Second, this tribal-non-tribal difference persisted after controlling for individual socio-economic characteristics, confirming that tribal cultural traditions and community structures made an independent contribution to the moderation of the generation gap. Third, the tribal cultural effect on the generation gap operated across all five dimensions of intergenerational divergence but was most pronounced in the technology use and family authority dimensions. Fourth, the higher intergenerational communication quality observed in Bastar was consistent with the hypothesis that the more face-to-face and communal character of tribal social life facilitated better intergenerational communication, which in turn moderated the generation gap.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

The findings brought to light several key theoretical insights. They pushed back against the idea that the generation gap is a universal phenomenon, showing instead that cultural context-especially tribal traditions-plays a crucial role in shaping how social change affects intergenerational differences. This research reinforced the idea of cultural protective factors as an essential tool for grasping the variations in the generation gap across diverse social and cultural settings. It highlighted the significance of community-level influences-like social norms, cultural practices, and shared identities-as key players in intergenerational relationships within families, aligning with a social ecological perspective (Birditt *et al*., 2012) [3]. Moreover, it pointed out that the generation gap should be viewed not just as a result of individual socio-economic factors, but as a community-level issue influenced by the unique cultural backdrop of the community where families are situated.

6.3 Practical Implications

The findings have some really important implications for both policy and social work practice. For those in policymaking, it's clear that the unique strengths of tribal communities-like their strong sense of community, face-to-face interactions across generations, and shared cultural practices-are valuable social resources that need to be protected and supported, rather than pushed aside by the one-size-fits-all approaches of modernization programs. Policies that unintentionally undermine these cultural assets-such as quickly rolling out digital technology in tribal areas without also investing in the cultural frameworks that help maintain intergenerational bonds-could actually widen the generation gap in these communities, even if they do improve material living conditions.

For social workers in non-tribal settings, these findings highlight the need to intentionally foster the kinds of face-to-face interactions, shared cultural practices, and community solidarity that tribal communities often have naturally. This could be achieved through creating intergenerational community programs, initiatives for passing down cultural knowledge, and training in

communication skills that aim to replicate the organic intergenerational connections found in tribal life (Kapur, 2018; Sharma *et al*., 2023) [14, 27].

6.4 Future Research Directions

The current study has opened up several exciting avenues for future research. For instance, a design that directly compares matched samples of tribal and non-tribal respondents within the same district-while controlling for factors like residential environment, income, and education-would offer a clearer test of the tribal cultural hypothesis. Additionally, qualitative research that delves into the specific cultural mechanisms by which tribal traditions influence the generation gap-such as the importance of oral cultural transmission, community rituals, collective identity, and intergenerational social norms-would provide deeper insights into the processes behind the quantitative patterns we've observed. Longitudinal studies that monitor changes in the tribal-non-tribal differences over time, especially as digital technology becomes more prevalent and traditional cultural practices face increasing pressure, would tackle the crucial question of whether the tribal cultural buffer against the generation gap can withstand the rapid pace of social change.

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