

FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSERVATION OF INDIGENOUS TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE (ITKs) AMONG TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The term Indigenous Technical Knowledge is used as “Local Knowledge” and “Traditional Knowledge” interchangeably. It is the dynamic knowledge or body of wisdom of the local people Brahma (2004). Indigenous Technical knowledge is the specific or the special knowledge of the ethno or the rural communities which is transmitted from one generation to the other by various means. Blending the traditional knowledge with the recent scientific advances paves way for incremental development in the field of Agriculture and the allied sciences. Indigenous technical knowledge is the local traditional knowledge that people have gained through inheritance in the form of creativity, innovation and skill. The tribals are especially having a set of trained practices of this ITK which helps them in their day to day life. ITK refers to knowledge about the local environment by the people and the communities.

This manuscript is to study the relationship between the social profile characteristics and the participation of the tribals in documentation and conservation of the ITKs among the tribal communities in the Western Ghats. The four important variables namely educational status, Farming experience, decision making behaviour, Progressiveness paved the influence towards participation of the tribals on documentation and conservation of the ITKs.

KEYWORDS: *Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK), Participation, Tribals*

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

ITKs are the part and parcel of the living community along with traditional environmental structuring. Of late the policy makers and the researchers started recognising the value and importance of these ITKs in the day to day life of the rural and the tribal communities paving way for sustainable livelihood (Sandhiya, 2019). In order to make the fullest use of this traditional wisdom, proper scientific applications are required in documenting, validating and application of ITKs. Agriculture Knowledge Information System (AKIS) and documentation of ITKs through IPR is such initiatives in this side.

Anonymous (1998) identified the special features of ITKs and explained the blending of the traditional and the scientific knowledge. This multi prolonged comprehensive approach should be added with the social component of the people wherein the participation study is the basic approach to identify the role of the tribal people on documenting and conserving ITKs.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted to study the participation of the tribals on documentation and conservation of the Indigenous Technical Knowledge of the Tribals in The Nilgiris District. Based upon the secondary data collected from the study area, four tribal groups viz., Kurumbas, Todas, Irulars and Kothars were the predominant agriculture based tribal communities; hence they were selected for the study. For collection of the primary data an interview schedule was constructed for the study. The data collection tools such as structured interview schedule, group discussion, key informant interview and observation were used for data collection. Secondary data were also collected from different sources and analysed using descriptive statistics. A total number of 120 respondents were contacted (30 from each tribal group) and data was collected. Four tribal groups viz., Thodas, Irulas, Kurumbas and Kothars were selected for the study. The Nilgiris District comprised of four blocks, viz., Udhagamandalam, Coonoor, Kothagiri and Gudalur. The Irulars and Kothars were found mostly in Kothagiri block, the Todas in Udhagamandalam and Kurumbas in Gudalur block was selected. Thirty tribal people were selected for each group and hence the population for the study was 120

Table 1: Selection of Respondents

Village	No. of Respondents
Kothar (Pudukothagiri)	30
Irular (Kunjapanai)	30
Todas (Pagalkod)	30
Kurumbas (Erumadu)	30
Total	120

Selection of the Independent Variables

The independent variables relevant to the study were selected based on the review, discussion with experts and a pilot study was conducted in order to finalise the independent variables. Based on the rating by the experts eight variables were selected and the measurement as below was done

Table 2: Independent and Dependent Variables for the Study

Sl. No	Name of the Variable	Scoring Procedure
Independent Variable		
X ₁	Age	Census 2011
X ₂	Educational status	Developed by Mansingh (1993)
X ₃	Farming experience	Developed by Mansingh (1993)
X ₄	Social participation	Developed by Mansingh (1993)
X ₅	Information seeking behaviour	Adopted by Jamatia (1999)
X ₆	Economic motivation	Developed by Supe (1969)
X ₇	Decision making behaviour	Developed by Cinthia(2009)
X ₈	Progressiveness	Developed by Pareek and Rao(1974)
Dependent Variable		
Y ₁	Participation of the tribals in ITK documentation and conservation	Developed by Ganesan (1989) and modified by Cinthia(2009)

Simple statistical analysis such as percentage analysis and correlation was applied for the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Factors Influencing the Documentation and Conservation of ITKs among the Tribes

The dependent variable was the level participation of the tribals on Documentation and Conservation of ITK practices. This was measured with a three point continuum as low, medium and high as adopted by Ganesan (1989). The independent variables identified were age, educational status, farming experience social participation, information seeking behaviour, economic motivation and decision making behaviour. The correlation (Table 3) reveals the following relationship of the dependent and the independent variables

Table 3. Relationship between the Participation of the Tribals on Documentation and Conservation of ITK and The Independent Variables

n=120

Sl. No	Independent Variable	r Value
1.	Age	0.140 NS
2.	Educational Status	0.139*
3.	Farming Experience	0.182**
4.	Social Participation	-0.011NS
5.	Information Seeking Behaviour	0.154 NS
6.	Economic Motivation	-0.017 NS
7.	Decision Making Behaviour	0.211**
8.	Progressiveness	0.194**

*Significant at 0.05 level, **Significant at 0.01 level, NS – Non significant

It is revealed from the above table that Educational status, farming experience, decision making behaviour and Progressiveness were the factors influencing the participation of the tribals on documentation and conservation of ITKs. Educational status has a positive correlation with the participation of the tribals on ITK conservation. The tribals are now more educated and they realize the importance of the ITKs that they have to conserve for their future generation. Some of the high qualified educated people felt that commercialization of the ITKs also would earn more livelihood for them. Farming experience also had a positive relationship with the participation of the people on ITK conservation. More farming experience influenced on the continuous usage of the important ITKs of Agriculture in the field condition. Decision making behaviour is one of the important individual characteristics which influence the participation of the people. The involvement in documentation of the ITKs has been banned in the tribal groups of Irulas and the Todas. The traditional wisdom or the knowledge of the people will be buried along with their ancestors. But now they realize the importance of documentation of the ITKs. Some of the young likeminded people were eager to join as a communal group and document the ITKs of location specific interest for the betterment of their livelihood. Progressiveness is the degree to which the tribals were receptive to modern values and practices. They are progressive in social fencing and environmental safety. The level of awareness on conserving the biodiversity, importance of ITKs positive correlation with progressiveness of the individuals in conserving the ITKs also. The results of the relationship of the ITKs with the Socio Economic status rea partially in conformity with those of Sakeer *e. al.* (2016)

CONCLUSIONS

The independent variables such as education, farming experience, decision making behaviour and progressiveness were influential on the participation of the tribals in ITK documentation and conservation. Among them education is the vital component of the socio- personal characteristics of the individual that decides the documentation of the ITKs. More educational status of the people more vibrantly the documentation and conservation could be done.

Location specific Environmental Education Modules would be an important tool to enhance the participation of the tribals in ITK conservation. Unless participatory mode of conservation is implemented the fullest use of the ITKs could not be tapped.

A policy initiative on the “Social Fencing” would be the need of the hour to sustain the ITK documentation, conservation and usage various field of applicability as they are eco-friendly as well as environmentally sound.

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