Original Research Paper

Sociology

TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AND CULTURAL TRANSITIONS AMONG THE SOLIGA TRIBES OF KATHIRIMALAI HILLS

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ABSTRACT This study examines the relationship between technology adoption and cultural transitions among the Soliga tribes of the Kathirimalai Hills, an Indigenous community characterised by geographic isolation, low literacy, and strong traditional practices. As technology increasingly shapes modern life, tribal populations face unequal access, resulting in social and digital exclusion. Using an explanatory, qualitative approach, the research employed Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with Soliga farmers, housewives, and parents to understand their awareness, perceptions, and challenges regarding technology usage. The findings reveal diverse viewpoints: while some community members recognize the potential benefits of technology for livelihood improvement, education, and agricultural productivity, others express concern that rapid technological change may disrupt cultural norms and long-standing traditions. Key barriers identified include inadequate infrastructure, poor road connectivity, limited electricity, and a lack of skills and awareness. The study underscores a critical research gap in understanding the socio-cultural dimensions of technology adoption among Soligas in Tamil Nadu. It emphasizes the need for culturally sensitive policies that enhance digital literacy and infrastructure while preserving Indigenous identity. Overall, the research provides valuable insights into how technological change intersects with tribal culture and development aspirations.

KEYWORDS : Technology Adoption, Cultural Transition, Indigenous Communities, Tribal Development and Socio-Cultural Change.

INTRODUCTION

The Scheduled Tribes are also known as the Adivasi, Girijana, Moolanivasi, Indigenous people, or Vanavasi. According to the 2011 census, 10.42 crore Indians are classified as "Scheduled Tribes," which accounts for 8.6% of the nation's total population. Majumdar (1950) defines a tribe as ''a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous with no specialization of functions ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes''.

Soliga Tribes

The Soligaru, more popularly known as Soliga, an ethnic tribe that inhabits the hilly and forest tracts of the Western Ghats of Mysore district. Also, they are found concentrated in and around the forest tracts of Mahadheshwara Hills and Biligiri Rangana Hills in Karnataka state. Furthermore, they go by the name Sholaga and are found in the contiguous area of Tamil Nadu. In the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, this community was notified only in the districts of Bangalore, Tumkur, Chitradurga, Kolar, Mysore, Hassan, Shimoga, Chikmagalur, and Mandya (Koppad et al., 1961).

Technology and Its Usages

The application of scientific knowledge to the creation of tools for the purpose of resolving particular issues can be defined as a technology. But technology is not value-neutral and it is linked with social change and can alter cultural settings. Also, the use of technology not only influences appliances or computers but also traditional practices like agriculture, fishery, animal husbandry and many more. No doubt the rapid proliferation of social media and ICT tools has solved complex problems of transportation, communication and self-education. However, it has also influenced an individual's life world, the formation of human-to-human and human-to-machine relationships. But people who live in rural societies cannot access these technologies as much as urban people. Among them, tribal people don't know about the importance of technology due to a lack of skills and knowledge about it. It leads to social exclusion between the urban and tribal people because the more informed people are considered more affluent in this decade.

Review of Literature

Sajeev M.V et al (2023) have conducted a study on the consumption habits of fresh and dried fish, as well as the factors that influence fish purchase, among the Koragas and Soligas. Additionally, we prioritized raising awareness regarding the advantageous effects of consuming fish and enhanced the tribes' ability to create fish-based products.

Bawaskar (2022) explored traditional and creative ways that have proven to be effective, cost-efficient, and viable alternatives to the chemical and other methods currently used for pest control in Taser sericulture.

V. Ramakrishnappa (2022) have examined the vision areas of digital India initiatives and analysed various issues and challenges faced by Indian tribal communities to access digital services and digital platforms.

Shoja Rani and Liya joy (2022) perused the presence of a digital gap within the Paniya tribal population residing in the Kannur area. Furthermore, it identified the factors contributing to the digital divide within the Paniya Tribal community.

Agnihotri et al (2021) they demonstrated that a more profound comprehension of the Soliga language and culture, which are vital aspects of daily life. It also facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between small Indigenous communities,

Identification of Research Gap

In sociological aspects, there is no research on the Soliga tribes of Kathirimalai Hills. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the lifestyle of the Soliga tribes in Tamil Nadu. Hence, the ethnographic research will deeply contextualize their cultural norms, values, and practices in relation to technology adoption and utilization in their day-to-day lives. However, very few studies have been conducted on these technological aspects of the Soliga tribes. The Government spends a lot of money on tribal development, but the government schemes have not been able to reach to the Soliga tribe, and even today they are facing a lack of basic facilities in their areas. This geographical isolation also plays a vital role in conducting research at a minimal level in Soliga tribes. Thus, a research gap exists in understanding the nuanced interactions between the Soliga culture and technology utilization within their socio-cultural aspects.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the research is
- ✓ To study the socio-economic demographic characteristics of the Solagar/Soliga tribes.
- ✓ To analyse the awareness and level of utilization of technology among the Soliga/Solagar community.
- ✓ To investigate the challenges of access and using technologies among Soliga/Solagar tribal people.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is explanatory in nature, and qualitative methodology was adopted to collect the data from the Soliga tribes living in Kathirmalai Hills. The Researcher also uses Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to enable the Soliga tribes to share and discuss their thoughts in a group. The use of the FG approach enables us to gather a sufficient number of data in a short period of time, yet we cannot confidently dispute the spontaneity of the participant inputs (Mishra 2016). Before FGD starts, the research has confirmed that everyone in a group feels comfortable discussing their feelings and perspectives with other members of the group.

Focus Group Discussion

This report summarizes the findings of a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted in Kathirmalai hamlet on the topic of technological usage and awareness. The overall objective was to understand the current level of technological familiarity, the willingness to adopt new technology, and the associated challenges perceived by the villagers.

Session Details

Feature	Session 1	Session 2
Date	October 21 2025	October 22, 2022
Place	Mangammal Temple (Village Entrance)	Kathirmalai Middle School (Evening)
Moderator	Ravi Kumar (Teacher)	Bharat (Teacher)
Topic	Technological Usage and Awareness	Technological Usage and Awareness
Participants	10	12

B. Participant Profile

The participants were adults from the hamlet, largely comprising farmers and housewives, with a slightly higher mean age in Session 2.

Group	Gender	Occupation	Session 1 Count	Session 2 Count	Total Count
1	Male	Farmers	5	5	10
2	Female	Housewives	3	4	7
3	Female	Farmers	2	3	5
Total			10	12	22
Mean Age			33.6	35.6	34.7

First Session

One of the well-known temples near the hamlet entry is Mangammal Temple. Additionally. It served as the gathering spot for all individuals to make important decisions pertaining to their needs and personal growth. Therefore, the researcher found it straightforward to organise a group of ten people and run the first FGD session. The moderator, Ravi Kumar, then gave a basic overview of the subject they would be talking about for the following several minutes. Some of the attendees were quite excited to talk about technology awareness and usage. The majority of the respondents enthusiastically engaged in the FGD session to express their opinions, despite the researcher's observation that they were not very tech-savvy. A portion of the participants are prepared to incorporate technology into their everyday routines. The importance of technology in today's environment is discussed, along with the necessity of adjusting to it and how it greatly aids their children in surviving.

The youngest participant, who was 21 years old, had no idea what technology was and had no desire to use it. because she believed that their lifestyle, traditions, and rituals would become somewhat chaotic due to the abrupt acceptance of technology. Following her lecture, the majority of responders acknowledged it and shared their opinions with the other attendees.

Second Session

In the evening, the second FGD session was held at Kathhirimalai Middle School. It was easy to put together a group of 12 people from the study area for the FGD session once the tribal people had finished their daily responsibilities. The parents of students enrolled at this school are the responders who took part in this conversation. The session began after the moderator delivered a thorough note on the assigned subject.

Two of them stated during this conversation that they lack access to these technologies due to their lack of literacy, ignorance of technology, and inability to enter the plain areas via roads. One participant, who is 22 years old, stated at the middle of the conversation that he could spend his entire life without using technology because their predecessors were happy and. healthy and did not have acess to these technologies.

Seven or so responders disagreed with him, stating that they are keen to embrace and make good use of this technology. A 44-year-old participant stated that he was prepared to use tractors to plough his property in order to save time and labour, but he was unable to do so. because it was significantly more costly than those who rented to plough land in plain regions. The tractor owners had to travel two hours on dirt roads to get to their village since no one in their hamlet had tractors for ploughing.

Additionally, he was worried that their exorbitant rent was due to inadequate road amenities. He has no choice except to use bulls to plough instead of the more conventional approach. A few people agreed with their viewpoints. Regarding these issues with using technology in their daily lives, they shared their opinions.

The participants listed a few requirements:
Offer facilities for electric current.
Offer a ration shop.

CONCLUSION

The study provides a comprehensive understanding of the Soliga tribe, their socio-economic life, and their interaction with technology. The Soligas, traditionally forest dwellers of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, have a unique culture rooted in self-sufficiency and close ties with nature. However, modernization and exposure to external influences have led to gradual shifts in their traditional systems, such as marriage, economy, and lifestyle. Despite government initiatives aimed at development, the Soliga community continues to face barriers like geographical isolation, poor infrastructure, and limited access to education and technology. The Focus Group Discussions reveal a mixed perception toward technology—while some see it as an opportunity for progress and improved livelihood, others fear it may disrupt their traditions and way of life. The study emphasizes that technology adoption among the Soligas is hindered by illiteracy, lack of awareness, and infrastructural deficits. It highlights the need for context-sensitive development strategies that respect tribal culture while promoting inclusion and digital literacy. Ultimately, the research bridges an important gap by contextualizing how technological change interacts with indigenous cultural identity, offering valuable insights for future policy and development initiatives aimed at empowering the Soliga tribe without eroding their cultural heritage.

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