Factors that determine the obstacles to sustainable development-
A case study of the Paniya tribe in the Nilgiris, Tamilnadu

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Abstract

Tribes are the native inhabitants of the land. The lack of education, loss of control over natural resources, the deficit in health and nutrition, erosion of identity, and lack of communication are significant obstacles to the development of tribal communities. Our study attempts to unveil the barriers such as low education, health issues and deficiency of efficacious communication based on the AGIL (Adaptation, Goal-Attainment, Integration, Latency) paradigm in the functionalist theory associated with the environment, social system, economic production and cultural pattern as the Paniya tribes in the Nilgiris district of South India are incompetent and oblivious to day-to-day events, not being decisive enough to grab the opportunities offered by the government. The exploratory case study design was adopted. The ethnographic method was used to collect data through participant observation, case studies, and face-to-face interviews using purposive and volunteer sampling. The findings indicate that the tribes are illiterate and ignorant regarding education, health, and social interactions. The measures would begin with survival problems for achieving substantial improvements through quality education, initiating the conversation for social interaction, good health and employment opportunities. The study suggests that training programmes with a participatory approach in education and health can increase social interaction and exposure to attain a better quality of life. However, it will remain dormant because the Paniya community is culturally restrained. Implementing participatory strategies that respect the community's cultural heritage can lead to their development and well-being.

Keywords: Education, Health, Communication, Barriers, Adaptation, Sustainable development

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1. Introduction

The term "sustainable development" can stimulate discussion on how society will advance in the future within an ethical framework built on the principles of inclusion, diversity, and integration. Since the worsening of environmental conditions in many parts of the world, it has become a firm objective for human society (Bossel, 1999). Considering participation sand assimilation as the philosophical underpinnings of societal advancement is not novel, it is elemental according to the marginalised communities as the attention and acceptance they deserve for social change and development. It cannot occur from a single source, it arises from the environment, family, community, social class, friends, relatives, peer groups, infrastructure, knowledge, and expertise in dealing with technology.

There are numerous communities in India. Within its population of 1.39 billion people (Government of India, 2021). Over 65% of the Indians reside in the rural areas and the country's population comprises 8.6 per cent of Scheduled Tribes (STs). An overwhelming majority of 50 per cent no longer lives in the forests, having moved into the amidst of the mainstream population (Mahapatra, 2018). Tribes are found throughout India, including the Central Zone, Western Zone, North Eastern Zone, Southern Zone, and the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands, but are most concentrated in the Central, Eastern, and North-Eastern Zones.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) comprise around 75 tribal communities in India based on their distribution, the scheduled tribes are classified into three major groups: northern zone, southern zone, and central zone. Todas, Paniyans, Kurumbas, Kotas, Soligas, Malayalees, Kadars, Kanichars, Mutheevans, Mannans, Irulas, Uralis, Malapantarams, Koyas, Yendis, Yeravas, Chenchees, and other tribal communities inhabit the southern zone (Kumar, 2015). There are thirty-six scheduled tribes in Tamil Nadu, with six tribal communities classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) (Kumar, 2014; Vadnergar, 2017; Anandhakumar, 2020; Ganesh, 2021). The majority of India's tribals are backward and oppressed. The Paniyas are one of Tamil Nadu's Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) who are behind in socio-economic aspects (Stritikus, 2010). There are several regions where the Paniya tribes have established themselves, but they have

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primarily settled in the villages of Gudalur and Pandalur Taluk (Bandhu, 2010; Monisha, 2020).

2. Theoretical Underpinnings

Analysing the available action system and its subsystems is called the AGIL paradigm that has the four functional requirements by Parsons (1930), namely adaptation (A), goal attainment (G), integration and latent pattern maintenance (L). To persist or preserve tranquillity concerning its environment, any system must adopt those conditions that help to attain its goals, integrate its components, and maintain its latent pattern. These are anointed as the system's functional imperatives. The relationship between interaction and communication is a significant problem. Interactivity is fundamental to working out and coordinating the endless prospects for meaning, action, and coherence in any situation (Aakhus, 2007). The interaction may produce communicative results such as entertainment, justice, policies, contracts, and information. Indeed, collectives arise to support fundamental forms of interaction that rely on the growth of diverse skills, tools, knowledge, and other non-linguistic resources that may be implemented in tribal communities for intercultural communication and the achievement and fulfilment of life goals. Sustainable development demands a huge redistribution of wealth and power.

According to O'Riordan (1989) and Louis (2000) the development emphasises justice and equity, believing that if these are not at the centre of any analysis, ecological problems will be attributed to people in mainstream society who are held equally responsible. This contrasts the argument made by those who claim that wealth creation established on renewability and replenishment rather than exploitation is a contradiction in modern capitalism (Hopwood et al., 2005). This tendency is prominent in the philosophy of some ecologists who hold the entire human race accountable for the ecological crisis, thus concealing racial, class, and gender distinctions. In an unequal society, the weakest members experience poverty and lack access to resources. So, the study focuses on the Nilgiris tribal Paniya community, which is the most marginalised. The sustainable development programmes can be introduced to this community for creating awareness.

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According to (Gilmore, 2017; Demah, 2017), discriminatory systems are based on crucial factors like racial or ethnic origin, nationality, education, gender, immigration status, age, occupation, earnings, disability, and position as a member of a minority, among others. These elements should be considered while assessing the advancement of minority development in the framework of the 2030 Development Agenda. Harley (2000) and Lee & Schuele (2010) states that Age, gender, employment, income, marital status, and educational attainment are utilised to demonstrate that they significantly impact social and economic development.

Demographic information gives data on research participants and is required for determining if the persons in a given study are a representative sample of the target population for generalisation purposes (Lee & Schuele, 2010). The independent variables consist of the Age, Gender, Qualification, Occupation, and Income. Education and health are two crucial aspects of socioeconomic progress. Improving health through enhancing education is possible, which may be accomplished through social interactions (Dash, 2013). Thus, Education, Health, and Communication depend on the community's ongoing growth factors was chosen as the dependent variables.

3. Literature Review

Tribes are geographically and socially secluded and economically marginalized communities (National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, 2003; Saxena, 2019; Brahmanandam, 2016). Sincere and combined efforts were made for tribals' economic and educational development (Zimmerman, 1995; Bagheri et al., 2007; Gautam, 2013; Ayush, 2020). However, the ushering in of the tribes into education remains deficient which has taken them away from this domain. The number of dropouts from the early stage of their schooling is high (Callanan et al., 2014; Manojan, 2017; Nayak et al., 2020) Education has the utmost importance in empowering people, significantly the weaker sections of the society (Brahmanandam, 2016). In the context of the marginalized sections, education is reiterated as a weapon of liberation and an agency that yields to radical expressions and negotiations for the Paniya tribes.

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Democracy principles have been violated throughout the educational process by failing to provide equality regarding knowledge and culture. The exploitation and oppression continue to act in the tribal mindset and consciousness. As such, freedom from these mistreatments and dominations contest the self-determination of the downtrodden. To mould this idea, the educational process has to perform an essential role in the Paniya community. It is a tool to liberate the marginalized provinces from illiteracy, ignorance, and superstitions and thereby facilitate the tribal people to resist injustice, exploitation and oppression (Pradhan, 2004). The health factor of the tribal community is deficit. The indigenous people are still reluctant to visit public health facilities since the modern healthcare system lacks emotional support and spiritual safety (Ministry of Tribal affairs, 2013).

It should be understood that education has an intrinsic relationship with the culture and locality of the people since their typical way of life is very much bound with it, so it has to perform a significant role in the tribal societies exceptionally. As Choudhury (1982) suggests, the tribals are tormented by development schemes and external interventions and have been influenced to a large extent by taking advantage of their proximate state of backwardness. Those measures have been mainly constitutional protection, law-making, economic inducements and reservation in educational institutions. Nevertheless, contemporary research shows that the tribal children are not attracted to formal schooling, and there is a vast educational gap and inequality between the tribes and other weaker sections in Indian society. (Sachidanandha, 1999; Singh, 1994; Sujatha, 1999; Agarwal, 2014; Desai, 2016; Varughese, 2020). Moreover, education serves as the catalyst that empowers individuals, strengthens communities, and paves the way for long-term progress. By providing access to quality education, the Paniya community can acquire the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to address challenges, create economic opportunities, and improve their overall well-being while preserving their cultural identity. Based on the conclusions drawn from the review, the following research question can be formulated as

RQ1: *What is the significance of indigenous knowledge in tribal education and health and its causes?*

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There is a strong concurrence that 'developmental steps' taken in the country have not succeeded in empowering the tribal communities (Mander, 2020; Murmu, 2022) Nonetheless, they have developed a submissive mindset among the indigenous people. In addition, it has reinforced the unequal distribution of socioeconomic resources between poor and wealthy groups (Heredia, 1992). This problem has also expanded to a considerable extent in the educational arena. To achieve long-term development, marginalised people must improve their economic and social standing, and education is a crucial pathway in this regard. The Paniyas of the Nilgiris district are confronted with various difficulties because they cannot meet their most basic needs. Their major problem is that children need help in identifying and relating to the school's practices and environment as it precludes their active involvement in academic life.

In the domains of development, the populace's health is also an important factor for a nation's socio-economic change. WHO (World Health Organization, 1948) describes health as "a state of the whole physical, mental, and social well-being and not just the dearth of disease or infirmity". In actuality, the underprivileged population, such as the Paniya community, suffers from a quadruple burden of illness, including contagious diseases, non-communicable diseases, malnutrition, mental well-being, and addictions, all exacerbated by poor health-seeking behaviour. The affordability and accessibility to the health care facilities are found wanting as it is closely connected with socio-cultural factors, the roles of gender and the concern of human rights, and personal relationships (Kamaraj, 2018).

It is also observed that among tribal populations, reproductive health is composed of mysterious philosophies related to sickness heeded by the treatments, dependable traditional medicine, traditional treatments, mixed intrusions of traditional and conventional modern health care treatments (Chaudhuri, 1994; Bhardwaj, 2010 Santhosam, 2013; Salehin, 2015; Kanrar, 2020). Ayurveda and Unani are two examples of Indian medical traditions not well-known or accepted today by the Paniya community. It has been marked from a recent study for a decade that there is a keen preference among the tribal women for modern medical facilities only if it is accessible (Zuckerman, 2004;

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Kumar, 2007; Chanu, 2010; Tavecchi, 2018; Abdul, 2020; Negi, 2021). Likewise, The Nilgiris Paniya community does not have enough healthcare amenities.

In addition, many are unaware of their health conditions, which include malnutrition, sickle cell anaemia, TB, bronchopneumonia, diabetes, chronic hypertension, and excessive alcohol use, which is the primary issue (Lima, Nursing tutor (ASHWINI) Association for Health Welfare in Nilgiris, 2022). The other significant factors that affect these people's health are their superstitious beliefs. Traditional tribal social-religious practices can also adversely affect the reproductive health of the tribal women and general health, such as alcohol consumption during pregnancy (Salehin, 2012). The lack of skilled professionals to provide effective health care in tribal communities is the most significant challenge and hindrance.

The knowledge and awareness of family planning are low among the vulnerable tribal groups (Kanitkar, 1988). There is an exigency in understanding the different health aspects of tribes and their specific health needs so that appropriate health measures can be prepared and implemented (Maiti et al., 2005). Many tribal members are ignorant of diseases and their effects. They experience malnutrition, anemic illnesses, dental issues, diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting due to their sluggish attitude and ignorance of medical treatments. Additionally, because of their poor hygiene, fungal infections are very common (Priya, 2022, Healthcare support worker ACCORD hospital). Education and communication are essential for a person to exist and for humankind to advance as it is a tool to facilitate the tribes to acquire enough knowledge on health care practices. Building upon the conclusions of the review, the research question that emerges is

RQ2: What are the primary barriers the Paniya community faces in accessing healthcare and education facilities?

Communication, at the core of every social action and contact, is a related tool that fosters understanding, makes work easier, and enhances communal living. No individual, group, or civilization could exist without interacting with others. Humans require interaction with their surroundings as a support system for acquiring their basic needs and to survive. This connection occurs as a result of social interactions and communication (Soekanto, 2006).

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Communication is necessary for social interactions since it allows information, ideas, attitudes, and emotions to flow from one person to another. This situation might emerge either directly or indirectly due to the use of communication. (Gerbner, 1967; Theodorson, 1969; Tubbs & Moss, 2000; Effendi, 2002; Patel, 2010; Mahananda, 2015) studies showed that 83 per cent of the people spent their time on communication.

According to Rogers (1983), Individual or collective communication behaviour can be observed with participation, a relationship with the social system, social support, social change, exposure to the mass media, active information seeking, knowledge of current issues (innovation), and leadership. The empowerment of a community is linked to communication patterns Chitnis, 2005; Nuridayati, 2021; Handyani, 2022). Societal empowerment aims to turn individuals or groups into self-sufficient entities, it can be achieved through cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor capacities (awareness, responsiveness, and adaptation) to think, make decisions, and act appropriately to solve a problem (Hikmat, 2004; Sidu, 2006; Haryanto, 2006; Neura, 2022) that will be beneficial for the community.

To develop a community, knowledge regarding worldviews should be made available to all individuals, from metropolitan to distant rural areas. To accomplish this, proper communication must take place in order to disseminate the messages. (Fatemeh, 2015; Benjamin, 2020) asserted that the communication barriers posed by religious fundamentalism, ethnic prejudice, social class, discrimination, power distance, and other factors can be defeated through Interpersonal and Intercultural communication which can be used as effective communication strategies for development (Arunachalam, 2005) that must be practiced among Paniya tribes.

According to McAnany (2016), broad societal awareness regarding the importance of communication can be undertaken globally to reach individuals. However, he observes that world leaders and development agents do not appropriately emphasize communication in development processes; there is a need and a problem to prioritise communication for development and social change today (McAnany, 2012; Pitje, 2020). Effective communication is essential for a community, a family, and a society. Acceptance of

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communication from the top down or upward, regardless of hierarchy, engages in healthy growth of oneself and one's environment.

The components in the communication process determine the quality of communication. A problem in these factors (sender and receiver) can ameliorate communication effectiveness (Keyton, 2017). Individuals are more conceivable to perceive information favourably when it blends with their own beliefs, values and needs (Keyton, 2010). Three fundamental conceptions are kindred with psychological and social barriers: experience, filtering, and psychological distance (Antos, 2011). Lunenburg (2010) opined that experience includes people's backgrounds, perceptions, values, biases, needs, and expectations. Filtering is what people want to take as a message according to their beliefs. Psychological distance is the mental state as how they perceive the mainstream people. Although paniyas want to live in a secluded place, they need a linking element to join the mainstream. Based on the conclusions drawn from the review, the following research question can be formulated as

RQ3: What are the main factors that influence social interactions between the Paniya community and external entities?

Transformation in the life of the Paniya tribal community will only ensue if there is a desire for life modification. Transformationalists conceive a different future, beginning with the premise that environmental degradation, poverty, and a lack of justice are not historical accidents. The connection is rooted in a society of dominance and exploitation of the environment by people. Some communities and people are wealthy because others are poor, and vice versa, in what O'Connor (1989) and Das (2012) labels combined and uneven development. Sustainable development demands a huge redistribution of wealth and power.

According to O'Riordan (1989) and Louis (2000) who argues that wealth creation established on renewability and replenishment rather than exploitation is a contradiction in terms of modern capitalism, it also emphasises justice and equity, believing that if these are not central to any analysis, ecological problems will be attributed to people in the mainstream society that is held equally responsible. This tendency is prominent in the

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philosophy of some ecologists who hold the entire human race accountable for the ecological crisis, thus concealing racial, class, and gender distinctions. In an unequal society, the weakest members experience poverty and lack access to resources.

The poor bear the heaviest burden of disease, conflict, and environmental issues (Sachs, 1999; UNDP, 2002; Agyeman et al., 2003). The association between environmental degradation and human exploitation encourages the formation of alliances between environmental and social justice movements as they lack education. They face difficulty mobilising a strong and cohesive coalition to make the necessary changes (Billhopwood, 2005; Gebreselassie, 2010).

According to Haughton (1999), the core values of sustainable development are environmental protection and justice. It has gained widespread approval despite being open to multiple interpretations. It encompasses the most important issues for humanity, including how to ensure lives worth living, our relationship with the planet, and our relationships with one another. Achieving sustainable development will necessitate attaining fundamental developmental goals such as Education and Health for a community to make headway in life. Whereas the first, the development component, is concerned with satisfying the requirements of the current generation, the second, the sustainable component, is concerned with human activity that threatens future generations' capacity to meet their own needs. It is also observed that many development programmes aim to enhance simply the economic position of tribal people, ignoring other facets of their social lives. For instance, health and hygiene, education and communication are among these areas. Building upon the conclusions of the review, the research question that emerges is

RQ4: What are the key barriers or challenges that the Paniya community faces in attaining their goals and integrating into mainstream society?

4. Research Methodology

The Exploratory Case study design, Hew & Hara (2007), Creswell (2007), Yin (2014), was adopted to obtain information about the factors that determine the obstacles for development among the target population. According to Schwandt and Gates (2018),

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"ethnographic methodologies focus on constructing arguments concerning the cultural, group, or community development or exploring other sociocultural phenomena." To explore the culture and basic sustainable development factors of a paniya community the study adopted ethnographic case study method.

4.1. Data Collection

Ethnography case study is used to address the research questions, the researcher combined three qualitative methods long interviews, archival analysis, and participant observation using semi structured questions as a tool. Data collected in audio, visual, notetaking and Image format (Lecompte & Schensul, 1999). The researcher followed best practices to enhance data collection, maximize methodological rigor and trustworthiness, and handled the data ethically (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989).

The researcher carried out 65 Semi-structured, long interviews. The person in charge of the community decided to delegate the task of responding to the questions to the members of this group because they were relatively more skilled in interacting with other people. Compared to other community members, the population being targeted had more direct involvement in relation to the topics at hand. The naturalistic generalization of emic and etic perspectives was analysed after the documentation of information given by the cases. For the study only 4 case studies were taken in account as they fulfilled the following factors as the key informants - *Willingness to communicate, Level of self-confidence was high, Decision makers of their life, The adults mediate the belief systems from the older generation to its successor, Self-awareness, Self-disclosure, Outer motivation, social interaction levels, Open mindedness.*

4.2. Sampling

The samples are the Paniya tribals from the Nilgiris district located in Gudalur Taluk. The study used two sampling techniques purposive and volunteer. The reason for select cases are (i) To ascertain if changes had occurred, informants of all ages—both elderly and young—were needed (ii) Have adaptable working circumstances. (eg. Working people or resting individuals at home, temporary employees) (iii) Those who interacted and being cooperative with the researcher as Paniya are introvert. (iv) Those who are aware of the

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accessibility of local resources for health and education. Out of 65 samples, four members of the Paniya tribe and their responses to the developmental elements of education, health, and communication are represented, as these respondents were able to answer all questions which is considered as the key informants. The four samples are considered as the representatives of the entire community. Other informants were shy, unwilling and introverted to answer a few questions regarding health status, and a few did not respond to most of the questions regarding education, so such cases were omitted.

According to Ruiz-Cantero (2007), gender insensitivity androcentrism is representatives of forms of prejudice that are not supported by evidence. Therefore, gender bias in the analysis could be portrayed as a systematic error that is gender-dependent and related to a social construct. This procedure incorrectly regards women and men as being equally different from one another. In order to remove any possibility of bias based on gender, the cases for this study consisted of two men and two women.

4.3. Participant Observation

As a participant observer, the researcher was in the field to gather data from the samples. The Paniya community has 50 households in Puramanavayal. The researcher travelled to the field and spent significant time with the community. Long face-to-face interviews and unstructured questions were employed to obtain data for the study. Often, researchers need to find out whether a case is typical due to a lack of information on all cases. In this circumstance, the researcher may instead select a notable or handy case to investigate owing to a personal relationship with the group or another factor (Brancati, 2018). The researcher engaged as an overt participant to gather in-depth information about the target community. There were about 250 people including elderly people and children in the area. The researcher interacted with sixty-five community members, including children, the elderly, middle-aged, and adolescents. All age groups were included in the study. The individuals selected for this study are deemed to reflect the community as a whole.

4.3.1. Imponderabilia of actual life

Many significant events cannot be captured by questioning or computing records but must be observed in their actuality, called Imponderabilia of actual life (Robben et al., 2007).

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The day-to-day observation focuses on the whole Paniya community dwelling in Puramanavayal from the Gudalur taluk since the population estimate in the Nilgiris area of Tamil Nadu is notably high.

4.3.2. Routine of a Mans working day

Living in an intercultural environment, the Paniya community's residents get up between five and six in the morning and bathe outside or in the river. It is normal to defecate in public. For daily pay jobs, the estate's owners and landowners contact them. If the location is far, everyone gets in a jeep; else, they walk. A couple of them wait for particular jobs from the owners at the bus stop. They frequently have breakfast near the bus stop, such as tea, parotta, or idly. Many people are on empty stomachs in the morning. Women act similarly to men. Men and women are both finding jobs in this area. There are a few women performing chores at home.

They go for areca nut and tea leaf picking and construction, agricultural, and service station jobs. They receive a maximum of Rs. 150 to 200 for women and Rs. 300 to 500 for males. They may bring congee for their afternoon meal, or the proprietors will provide it at the office. After finishing their jobs, they walk back to their houses. As drinking alcohol is mandatory, they carry bottles inside so others can partake.

4.3.3. Details of the care of the body

The Paniya people in the community are unaware of their health status. Their daily habits, like alcohol, smoking tobacco, and chewing betel leaves, lead to extremely poor health. Males and females are equally afflicted with tuberculosis, the most pervasive health concern. Malnutrition and Bronchopneumonia are the most frequent diseases among youngsters. (ASHWINI) A separate mental health department would handle the association for Health Welfare in Nilgiris, male and female psychiatric issues, and nurses continued to monitor the clients.

Rehab specialist (Dr. Srinivasan Sundaram, 2022) reports that in Gudalur, the female-to-male ratio is substantially lower than the male-to-female ratio. As a result, guys are the

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ones who attend the hospital the most for alcohol-related problems (ASHWINI). Diabetes and persistent hypertension are prevalent among these individuals. Tribes visit the hospital for emergencies when they fight among themselves and when hurt in the hands, legs, or any other body part, as well as those who ingest poison and burn themselves (i.e., committing suicide).

Pregnant women do not receive frequent check-ups. Currently, more indigenous women deliver in hospitals than in the past. These paniya people or any other tribal group should pay Rs. 500 annually as medical insurance to receive a free annual check-up, treatment, medications, and meal in the hospital.

Nonetheless, Tribes are reluctant to pay the sum. However, the therapy will only be administered if the payment is made at delivery. It is always difficult to preserve these community members' health because they do not attempt to do so; it is always the health committee that pushes them to take care of their health. Mentally Retarded individuals are present. Individuals do not consult physicians for menstruation and dental disorders. They have much health-related illiteracy; even when health visitors try to teach them, they will not listen.

4.3.4. Manner of taking food and preparing it

The Paniya will take congee as their primary dietary source. They do not consume any food in the morning. Those going to work will have tea and Parotta from the tea shops, while home wives or ladies will not have breakfast. The afternoon meal will consist of congee with lettuce as a side dish. Every household has just *Congee* (Kanji) to drink in the afternoon, and they rarely prepare chapati or up at night or eat anything other than rice with sambar. Seasonally, they go to the fields to gather lettuce, crabs, and fish; they do not prefer chicken. They prepare crab and fish by grilling them and then devouring them. During festivals like Onam and Vishu, they serve rice with sambar and a few veggies as their traditional dish. Due to their poor income, they can only afford rice, despite their desire for a wide range of food.

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4.3.5. Tone of conversational and social life around the village

The tone of the conversation: It is neither high nor low with outsiders, but when they interact with community members, the tone is high. **Social life**: **Education** - They are culturally limited when it comes to education and career. Twenty children are pursuing higher education. Many adolescents and young children are school dropouts. **Access to information and Media** - Non-tribal residents have cable connections and power, and with their help, the connection is taken by the tribal community.

Moreover, media consumption is quite low; young people do not use social media, and just a handful has Android phones. Even though they can access television, they do not follow political news and are mostly interested in serials. The paniya community does not seek information. **Wealth** - The people in this area do not own any land. They do not own anything. They work every day and spend the money they make. They do not have any savings. They do not have any savings. **Family size** - The family size is nuclear since it depends on the manufacturers' construction. Nevertheless, the family is forced to split into smaller families because of a lack of housing. Population - This area is home to the Paniya community, which has around 250 people.

5. Findings and Discussion

CASE 1

Name- Chandran, Gender-Male, he is of age 55. A 'Cooley' by profession. Chandran was born in Melpaadi in Gudalur. He studied up to eighth standard in Malayalam medium in Bathery, Kerala. He attended school under the compulsion of his parents but is unable to make use of his education in his day-to-day life.

The Educational factors

He attributed the reason for discontinuance of school to his family circumstances. *"The family situation was worse; I had to take the responsibility of my family and went to work at the age of 15. I do daily wage work and used to earn Rs. 2 per day and Rs. 500 for a week. I have gone for occupations like plucking tea leaves and areca nuts, construction, and agriculture. Though I studied till the eighth standard, I forgot what I studied".*

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The health factors

I have not visited the hospital until now. Since the money I earn is very little, I do not want to spend it on health or education of my children too". From the earlier days not only me the entire community will not visit the hospitals for any illness. Now due to compulsion we had to take our family members to hospital if there is any emergency. We should have an insurance which will be provided by the hospital or we should pay Rs. 500 for a year in the Adivasi hospital for the free treatment. But I am not even able to pay that amount.

The communication factors

I do not prefer talking with people who belong to the same community. I go out for work in the morning return home in the evening. After eating food and drinking alcohol I go to sleep. There is no need for initiating a communication with anybody. I don't even know how many families are here. My level of communication within the community is low because within the community conflict of interest occurs all the time. But I will communicate to other people of other communities as I am dependent on them for jobs and income. Only if I communicate with them, they will consider me for any job. But there is always a hesitation, fear and low level of confidence as I belong to the lower community and we are different from them.

The socio-economic condition of Paniyas is more destructive as they are marginalized. They do not adapt themselves to the circumstances though they live in an Intercultural situation. Due to a lack of communication, the development process of socialising has been greatly hampered. Improving these marginalised people's lot in society will be possible through communication (Lele, 2017). Lack of trust, self-confidence, self-esteem, personal freedom, self-awareness, interactions with family and peer groups, fear of criticism, dominance, shyness in approaching others, and a lack of social relationships are obstacles to healthy communication. Indigenous research priorities will support the paniya tribes' self-determination, mobilisation, and transformation.

The biggest barrier to their ability to learn and interact with others is their group's lack of interpersonal communication. These hurdles can be surmounted with effective communication. Interpersonal and Intercultural communications show a clear agenda for

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the social enclosure, gender focus, and cultural identity and hold great promise for achieving socioeconomic development (Jeffrey, 2000). Even though communication for development has been around since the 1960s and has proven to be effective in development, its importance is still not widely acknowledged or included in development planning (Fraser & Restrepo, 1998). Development in health and education cannot occur until communication resources are properly understood and used to bring about planned changes in the politics, behaviour, and social welfare of the general populace, especially tribal people. It is evident from Chandran's case that lack of interpersonal communication can reflect in a low level of self-esteem which retards progress. The accumulation and assimilation will be generated only when the psychomotor skills are developed individually.

CASE 2

Anita, aged 19, female. Education – 8th std, a drop out.

The educational factors

I lost interest in studies after the eighth standard. My friends from the same community also dropped out of school and that instigated me to be with them. I had no desire to be a school going girl. I like to be at home or go for any manual labour. Education has no relation with the lifestyle that we live now. Even if we are educated, we are not going to get any opportunities like others. So, instead of wasting our time by going to school it is better to go for daily wage work.

The health factors

I earn Rs. 200 by doing manual labour. It becomes harder to work during rainy times, and I do not have any savings. To survive during rains is the most difficult. My menstrual cycle is not regular and I know my health is not in a good state. Because, I have faced many issues like vomiting, being anaemic, fungal infections and diarrhoea. Often, I fall sick However, I do not want to spend my money on health or education. Instead, I can buy rice and vegetables for that amount".

The communication factors

If I talk with my community people they don't respond and so I don't like to talk to others, except my family. People consume alcohol and will start fighting in the evening time. They keep shouting at each other. It will always be a mess in the night. One or the other will

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start the fight. So, I never come out of my house most of the time in the evening. I will peep out the way how other communities do so when they pass by. But I am afraid to communicate with them. Even if we talk to our community people, they break our trust and keep talking about us in the evening times so I won't prefer to communicate with others as I don't trust them. If my community leader offers instructions, I will obey her because she does some good deeds like initiating and requesting the government to lay roads, build toilets and even houses for our community.

The conflict of interest is a significant problem for effective communication. The awareness on the need for education and health is not profound leading sedentary lives and maintaining individual identity is identical to most of them, neither seeking any development nor having any goals to be attained. The lack of social interaction, practical knowledge, customs, lifestyle opinions, and attitude towards factors like education, health and communication differ.

(Linden, 2012) denotes that, tribes have a favourable view of education and health. However, there are a few facilities in the tribal areas, and most people do not understand their value. The primary causes of not receiving education include a lack of interest in academic pursuits, a lack of drive, practical knowledge, and inspiration from elders (Suresh, 2011). Unawareness of health issues is due to a passive attitude. As time passes and tribal parents become more aware of their economic situation, they increasingly want their children to receive government-funded education (Shankar, 2019) and utilize government schemes for health. The tribes need to be made aware of the value of education and the importance of their health status. This can be done by providing them with appropriate training and positive interactions, which will cause a change in their attitudes, opinions, and behaviour.

CASE 3

Geetha, aged 20, is not educated. Geetha is very reserved in nature.

The educational factors

Very rarely I go to work and earn. I do household work and will sleep in my free time. My parents will not force me to do my schooling, and I have no interest in studies. I like to be

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at home. My parents and sisters are going for work, so I will be at home doing the household chores.

The health factors

My community people and I do not have enough basic facilities. The sanitation facilities are deplorable here. We do not even get proper drinking water. We go to the river beside our houses for taking bath and use the same water for drinking. At times, I fall sick because of the unclean environment, but I don't go to the hospital or take tablets".

The communication factors

I don't talk much to any of the people over here as I am not comfortable. I feel shy and inferior when I talk to them. Even during the festivals, I don't talk or interact with same community people. Even at home I don't talk much.

The Paniya community people's wants are very limited. Basic needs like food, shelter, and clothing are all they want. Better education facilities, modern health systems, a variety of commodities in the market, initiatives taken by the government and, schemes provided by government are not familiar with this community (Anandhakumar, 2020). The Parents are not aware of the education and do not take any effort to send their children to school, they are not even ready to spend a minimal amount of money to purchase school bags and stationery for their kids (Chetia, 2015). But now the government is providing free education with all basic needs, even then parents don't compel their children to attend school.

The teachers in the elementary and high schools took an effort, as far as possible, to visit the settlements and take the children to schools. But the children hide themselves from teachers and abscond from classes. Though they have the provision for Tribal Residential Schools within a few kilometres from their places, children often evade attending school. The education has an intrinsic relationship with the culture and locality of the specific people (Manojan, 2018) since their way of life is closely tied to it, it must play a special and crucial function in tribal communities to have an evolution in their lives.

Treiman & Ganzeboom (1990), Blau & Duncan (1967) and Purohoit (2022) propounds that parents are less likely to invest in their children's education when direct occupational transmission or change of capital is a viable option to obtain a good position in society for

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their children. As Geetha states that she is not interested in schooling it is the responsibility of the parents to make her study. Since education for a tribe is free, the parents of the entire community must educate their children. Low family income and tribal parents' illiteracy are the primary reasons for their children's negative attitudes about schooling (Hansdah, 2016). This is also the main cause for the higher dropouts of the tribal children. The value of education should be emphasised to parents and the entire community to improve their lives. Education for this community will result in a sustained improvement in their social and economic conditions.

As Kamath (2008), points out, the tribals are victimized by development projects and external interventions and have been largely exploited by taking advantage of their relative state of backwardness. Those measures have been mainly in the form of constitutional safeguards, legislation, financial incentives, reservation in educational institutions, and so on. Nevertheless, contemporary researches show that the tribal children are not interested in the processes of formal schooling and there exists a wide educational gap and inequality between the tribes and other weaker sections in Indian society (Manojan, 2018). The health and communication factors are found deficient in this case as they don't know the importance of it. The ecological system is also a main reason for their lag in these aspects.

The paniyas are bound to their culture, and to have a transition in the developmental path, they should first start adapting themselves to the new trends by setting their own goals with self - determination or develop an aspiration to achieve better in their lives. This can make the tribe integrate with the outer world as there is a huge dearth of interpersonal or intercultural communication.

CASE 4

Kopan, aged 28. Occupation- plucking areca nuts, tea leaves, and construction work. Income- Rs, 150 per day.

The educational factors

I used to secure first rank from my fourth std to 8th std. I wanted to continue my higher secondary classes in a different place as there are no proper schooling facilities here. But due to some personal reasons, I could not continue my studies. I always regret not being

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educated though I did not feel bad when I stopped my education. No one helped me out or told me about the importance of education. I would have re-enrolled in school at least after a year if I had known about it for sure. Our day-to-day life is like a battle where we could neither be in our own places (forests) nor with the mainstream.

The health factors

I am not getting any opportunity for a job and hence I am unable to pay for any illness. Even if we go to the hospital, they treat us differently. So, I stopped going to the hospital if I was not well. For my wife's delivery, I had to pay Rs. 500 and only then I would be given free medicines and food in the hospital. When I have no work, how can I pay Rs 500? After delivery, my wife struggled a lot. She was not healthy; she suffered from thyroid.

The communication factors

The world has improved greatly, but my life is still the same. Mainstream people are not ready to give the space for us, and we are not ready to accept their culture and traditions. Until someone talks to me, I will never initiate the conversation with others.

It is evident from Kopan's case that the lack of awareness among this community about the steps required to protect their health, education, lifestyle, distance from medical facilities, the shortage of transportation, and financial impediments is aggravated. The Paniya tribe attempts to preserve its tribal identity, still, changes in their tradition, economic standing, acceptance of a new culture, education & health awareness, and demand for work prospects are inevitable. Despite governmental efforts for their economic uplift, these tribal groups continue to live a pathetic life amid ignorance, indebtedness, ill-health, and above all unhealthy economic and cultural practices (Ramdas, 2016).

Paniya tribal community is engaged as manual labourer and there is not much diversity in their employment pattern and source of income. They have just begun to mingle with the society. Their earning capacity is very low. Even if it is a monthly-based salary or daily wages, this community will get a low amount for the work done. It is basically that these people won't demand anything, they only ask for the amount which is enough for consuming alcohol. Only the women who go to work will ask for a hike in the salary. They will continue to work even if they don't get the hike asked for. This is because Paniya

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group is seeking a change in their economic quality of living, and the responses indicate that women are more aware of their economic situation than males.

The education system in India generally does not take into account the vernacular languages of tribes (Ramdas, 2016). This fails to allow for the holistic development of local cultures, especially tribal cultures, as a vital component of diverse socio-cultural groups in India, notwithstanding cultural disparities. In other words, there is a lack in instrumentalizing 'unity in diversity (Ghurye,1980). While it cannot be denied today that education has brought about some social mobility for some tribes and has effectively allowed some individuals to grow the plight of the tribes, by and large, is a social concern.

UNESCO (1953) opined that the usage of mother tongue as teaching medium improves cognitive abilities as it is easier for a child to understand a lesson in its mother tongue. Using Paniya language as a medium of instruction will encourage community youngsters to pursue an education. Sahu (2019) found that changing the learning medium from mother tongue to a different language makes students insecure and leads to low self- esteem. Education and learning are vital because kids will have good exposure when they interact with non-tribals at school, and this will help them overcome the social hurdles they confront daily.

The teaching medium might be altered to encourage kids to attend school for their educational advancement. It can be given through effective communication. The awareness about the importance of education should be given since they are undergoing a rapid social change caused by modernization, deforestation, globalization, and other developmental activities. Government programs should help increase their health status as they suffer greater severity of diseases, especially women and children. It must also focus on the education of the tribals and improve their accessibility to residential schools.

6. Conclusion

The health and education status of the Paniya people is abysmally low. They are being ignorant of the importance of education and health is the major problem in this community. Lack of communication is also the central aspect as they lack self-concepts, self-

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determination, exposure and social interaction. The tribal population falls behind in practically every facet of development, and their economic standing is low (Government of India, 2013). The fear, anxiety and conflict of interest are barriers for this community to communicate with the mainstream society. Goals must be created and implemented to develop disadvantaged individuals to achieve long-term growth.

As the government takes measures to reach out to these individuals and implements changes, they must be applied with an understanding of the Paniya community's adoption strategies. Developmental efforts would only reach such underprivileged populations gradually since they lack basic requirements and facilities such as food, water, housing, power, and other amenities. When there are no suitable facilities, unsanitary behaviours are practiced. There are no toilets or separate washrooms, and open defecation is still practiced at this location. They have no safe drinking water facilities. Basic sanitary facilities are appalling.

To achieve the holistic development of tribal communities, a multifaceted approach prioritising education, communication, and health while preserving their cultural identity is necessary. Education equips individuals with knowledge and skills, enabling their participation in decision-making processes while preserving their cultural heritage. Effective communication facilitates dialogue, advocacy, and representation, amplifying indigenous communities' voices and recognising and addressing their needs. Emphasising health is essential for enhancing the welfare of individuals and also for the community.

Additionally, anxiety and low self-concepts of their self- Image, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-determination result in non-communication, leaving them isolated from any improvement in their life style. Efforts should be made to execute a continual health and education awareness programme through oral communication. This may result in changes among Paniya community members because their capacity to adapt to new technology and culture is subtle. The government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) need an appropriate communication channel to deliver social messages. A sustainable way of life with the combination of the social, health, economic, and environmental necessities that entail human and societal growth with adequate

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communication is the emergent demand. The need to innovate and structurally transform multiple Paniya society systems is a huge concern.

However, to raise living standards, the government must undertake transitions and system innovations based on the predefined objective of sustainable development. Because sustainable development is intrinsically a normative, ambiguous, and subjective notion, its execution must account for many individuals' inherent conflicts of values, ambitions, and aims in this society.

A community that adheres to its culture and is unaware of its health and education status must first attempt to communicate inside and beyond the group to get exposure and acceptance for the changing life. Integrating education, communication, and health in the Paniya community can improve well-being in the short term and lay the groundwork for long-term development. Education enables individuals to overcome poverty and pursue culturally relevant economic opportunities. This fosters self-sufficiency and communal cohesion while augmenting a feeling of self-esteem.

Therefore, the interconnection between education, communication, and health is crucial for developing indigenous communities and preserving their cultural legacy. Recognising and valuing these elements supports comprehensive and enduring development, allowing indigenous communities to thrive while honouring their cultural legacy. When individuals disagree, setting objectives as a community can help them integrate and strive towards change to enhance paniya life. Being residents and not exposed to the outside world is a barrier for them, and overcoming such obstacles will be difficult. The moral implications of the policy, as well as providing them with more time by constantly involving them in education and health programmes, can assist them in achieving sustainable development.

7. Policy Recommendations

- There is a necessity to augment access to education for all tribal groups by launching schools in the nearby area of tribes.
- Proper transport facilities should be equipped from home to a nearby school.

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- To bring the tribal children to the mainstream, the school curriculum should be planned according to their culture, dialect and local environment.

- Teaching and training should be modified concerning tribal culture. When they do not understand the regional language, it is needed to provide textbooks at the beginning of primary education in their language.

- Government should provide safe drinking water through panchayat taps in this tribal village.

- Tribals are deficient in calcium, vitamin A, Vitamin C, Riboflavin and animal protein; steps need to be taken to provide iron, calcium and vitamin tablets through the primary health centres and Anganwadi centres.

- Nutrition and health education should be imparted to the tribals, using audio-visual materials or oral communication through the local dialect.

- The primary health centres in tribal remote villages need to be strengthened, and there is a need to create awareness among the tribes regarding the harmful effects of excessive intake of alcohol and the use of tobacco/drugs.

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