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Research Paper

Exploring Modernity Among the Tiwa People in the District of Nagaon, Assam

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ABSTRACT

Modernization refers to a process, not a position or static phenomenon. It is the process of adjustment through adopting new requirements in life. The Tiwa community is one of the tribal groups that belong to the linguistic family of 'Tibeto' and 'Burma'. The present study aimed to explore modernity among the Tiwa people irrespective of gender and literacy. In the study, the investigator framed four villages within the jurisdiction of Tiwa Autonomous Council as population. 200 Tiwa people were selected as a sample of the study. A questionnaire was used to gather data from the family heads. Descriptive statistics and 't' tests were calculated to know the modernity and their significant difference concerning gender and literacy. Results of the study showed that Tiwa people prefer their modernity in the position of women. Comparing the modernity between males and females shows their preferences in the position of women and socio-religious aspects respectively. However, there is a substantial difference concerning gender in the dimension of socio-religious, marriage, and the position of women and similar in the dimension of education. Furthermore, the results of the study show that there are differences in modernity concerning literacy.

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INTRODUCTION

Modernization refers to a process, not a position or static phenomenon. It is the process of adjustment through adopting new requirements in life. It is comprehensive as well as complex with an objective and scientific outlook^[1]. It is a process of social transition which transforms society, politics, culture, agriculture, economy, and education. It refers to the thoughts, feelings, opinions, attitudes, and behavior through which one can change and adopt a new way of life^[2]. It is a process of movement from a traditional to a new order in

science and technology and an associative form of social structure, value orientation, and norms. "Modernization is a process in which major clusters of old social, economic, and psychological commitments are tough and broken and people become available for a new pattern of socialization and behavior"^[3]. Modernization is a holistic encompass of cultural values and personal orientation. Changing social relations encouraged through the innovative attitude of individuals and society by using science and technology

refers a modernization [4]. It is “the process based upon the rational utilization of resources and aimed at the establishment of a modern society”[5]. “Modernization is the process of social transition, which includes not only modernization of social objects but also that of social subjects”[6].

Among various social scientists, there is a disagreement on the concept of modernization and its evaluative standards due to ideological bias. There are two approaches to modernization i.e. Structural and Evolutionary approaches. The structural approach is preponderant in social science. In view of the Structural approach, modernization denotes analyzing selective social factors such as social mobility, communications, media exposure, democratization of political institutions, technological and economic resources of society and the early stage of the society. According to the approach, modernization is the result of the presence of these factors and their intensity and proportions. This intensity and proportion determine the nature and to what extent modernization happens in society [7]. Furthermore, it was believed that both development and modernization are closely related to each other. Modernization eliminates all the primitive aspects of society to lead a scientific and rational life. However, due to commercialization, liberalization and urbanization, people neglected cultural traditions, identity, etc. and practiced Western lifestyle in the name of modernization. Therefore, the investigator tried to understand how modernization has impacted these aspects among the people of the Tiwa community. Ideally, in a welfare state, to ensure inclusive and sustainable development, all the members of a society irrespective of their gender, geographical location, and socioeconomic status should be aware of the issues in different dimensions of society like education, environment, family planning, health and hygiene, human rights, politics, etc. However, the picture is quite different even in the 21st century, particularly concerning the marginalized and unprivileged sections of the society in our country. Assam, as part of the Northeastern region, comprises most of the ethnic groups of different races. Tiwa community is one of the tribal groups that belong to the linguistic family of ‘Tibeto’ and ‘Burma’. The Lalungs like to be addressed as “Tiwa.” The word “Ti” means “water,” while the word “Wa” means “superior”[8]. They have their language, rituals, social system, folkways, dance, etc. The Tiwas have an agro-rural economy based on indigenous farming practices. They have a wide range of folk dances such as the Barat dance, the Langkhun dance, the Khelzawa dance, the Mainary Kanthi dance, and the Sagra Misawa dance. Lord Mahadeva, also known as Mindaifa Mahadeo, is worshipped as the Tiwas’ primary God or supreme soul. The Tiwas governed central Assam in the past. They had twelve small kingdoms, the most well-known and powerful of which was the Gobha Kingdom. The Tiwa community in Assam is an influential ethnic group. According to the 2011 census total population of the Tiwa community in Assam is 371,000 approx[9]. They are distributed more or less in all the districts of Assam as well as

the State of Meghalaya’s Ribhoi district, but predominant in Morigaon, Nagaon, Hojai, Karbi Anglong and Kamrup (M). This indigenous group, despite having a long existence, has not been developed and modernized up to expectations to date.

The Tiwa community is spread over Assam's plains and hills areas. Plain Tiwa regions may be found across the state. Agriculture is the mainstay of the Tiwa people's economy. Although agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, a small percentage of the population works in cottage industries. Because agriculture cannot sustain a family's subsistence, teenagers are forced to leave their families and seek alternative work. Chronic indebtedness is a more substantial barrier to tribal development in Assam (plains). In numerous tribal groups, the problem of indebtedness is associated with low per capita land holding, a lack of contemporary scientific agricultural methods, a lack of infrastructural amenities, the tradition of making rice beer in large quantities during festivals, and so on[10]. The Assam government signed the Tiwa Accord with leaders of the 'Lalung Darbar' on April 13, 1995, as a consequence of their 28-year struggle for 'Autonomy [11]. The role of the Council is spelt out in the preamble of the Act. It is the utmost responsibility of the Tiwa Autonomous Council to bring economic development to the poor and backward Tiwa society. Economic development needs rising income, job opportunities, and economic self-reliance among the general masses. The Council has also to improve the poor social infrastructures i.e., efficient medical facilities, road connectivity, pure drinking water facilities, housing and sanitation, electricity, etc. in the Tiwa Societies to ensure the socio-economic development, for which they have been suffering for a long time. Their representation in different sectors is still not proportional to their population. Though the Tiwa Autonomous Council was established for their welfare and development, a large no of people in this community are still guided by orthodoxy, have a poor quality of life, and are exploited by elites [9].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i) To explore the modernity in the Tiwa community
- ii) To compare the modernity among the Tiwa community concerning their gender
- iii) To compare the modernity among the Tiwa community concerning their literacy

Hypotheses

Ho₁ There is no substantial difference in modernity among the Tiwa community concerning their gender.

Ho₂ There is no substantial difference in modernity among the Tiwa community concerning their literacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies were conducted to explore the modernization. The advancement of education encourages modernity and reduces traditionalism. A new system of values could be the

background to modernizing society [12]. The development of curriculum, performance-based learning materials, and specialization programs shaped the modernization of education, enabling the community to manage and complete their study [13]. Government schools have played a key role in educating and modernizing the tribe [14]. Modernization enables development and transformation. The impact of modernization was visible in the living pattern of the Khampa tribe [15]. Education played an important role in modernization and it has a positive impact on the attitude towards women’s reservation [16]. There is a substantial difference between highly literate working and non-working women and semi-literate working and non-working women [17]. Gender had an impact on the attitudes toward modernization [18]. Modernization and the rigidity of society affect the personal values of teachers [19]. Due to the rapid change in the educational status of the Tiwa community have also changed their attitude towards their traditional life [20]. Concerning the paucity it is essential for understanding the Tiwa people’s response to modern influences, offering insights into their evolving values and social dynamics.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research method is being employed to describe the phenomenon of the study. All the households of the revenue villages namely Lalungpar, Dakhin Gomariati, Nibukali and Ahomgaon were framed as the population of the study. A sample comprised of 200 family heads irrespective of gender and literacy was selected as a sample by employing the simple random technique. The “Modernization Scale” developed by Singh, R.S. *et al.*, (2012) was adopted to gather the required data. Data were analyzed according to the objectives by calculating mean, standard deviation, and ‘t’-test for measuring significance.

Table 2: Mean scores and ranking order of the dimensions of Modernization concerning their Gender

Dimensions of Modernization	Male (N=113)			Female (N= 87)		
	Mean	SD	Ranking Order	Mean	SD	Ranking Order
Socio-Religious	29.35	3.60	IV	31.28	6.33	I
Marriage	31.56	4.39	II	29.86	4.56	III
Position of Women	33.19	4.40	I	30.68	6.13	II
Education	29.54	4.35	III	28.70	6.32	IV

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows the mean scores among the male and female family heads followed by the dimension’s socio-religious, marriage, position of women and education are 29.35 & 31.18, 31.56 & 29.86, 33.19 & 30.68 and 29.54 & 28.70 respectively. Male family heads of the Tiwa community opposed the traditional bindings, rules, and thoughts that hinder the development of women. They believe that men and women are part and parcel of the development of society and they should be given freedom and opportunity to participate in all the developmental activities of the society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To analyze the objective, mean and standard deviation are calculated and tabulated according to the dimension of the modernization. As the statement of each dimension is an equal chance, following the mean scores of each dimension, the ranking order is given.

Table 1: Mean scores and ranking order of the dimensions of modernization

Dimension of Modernization	Family Heads of the Households of Tiwa Community(N=200)		
	Mean	SD	Ranking Order
Socio-Religious	31.37	4.49	II
Marriage	29.82	4.39	III
Position of Women	32.59	4.92	I
Education	29.38	4.85	IV

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 reveals the dimension-wise mean score and rank order of modernization among the family heads of the Tiwa community. The mean scores following the dimensions of socio-religious, marriage, the position of women, and education are 31.37, 29.82, 32.59, and 29.38 respectively. It indicates that the family head of the Tiwa community shows the highest modernity on the dimension of the position of women with a mean score of 32.59. They believe that men and women are part and parcel of the development of society and they should be given freedom and opportunity to participate in all the developmental activities of the society. The marriage dimension attained the third rank with a mean of 29.82. In contrast to other dimensions, the family heads of the Tiwa community are least modernized on the dimension of education with a mean of 29.38. The results also show

As well as female family heads discarded the practice of segregation based on caste and creed. Some of the people believe that God is supreme and the world is Maya or an illusion. From the observation, it was also found that the Tiwa people are conventional and governed by their traditional belief system. In this regard, there is a need to modernize to bring a positive and scientific outlook toward socio-religious aspects.

Table 3: shows the significant difference in the dimensions of Modernization concerning their Gender

Dimensions of Modernization	Male (N=113)		Female (N= 87)		't'	Remarks
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Socio-Religious	29.45	3.60	31.18	6.33	3.08	Significant
Marriage	31.76	4.39	29.96	4.56	4.15	Significant
Position of Women	33.09	4.40	30.78	6.13	4.16	Significant
Education	29.54	4.35	28.80	6.32	1.28	Not significant

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows the significant difference between male and female counterparts of the Tiwa community. The results show that there are differences concerning gender in the dimensions

i.e. socio-religious, marriage, and position of women. However, there is no substantial difference between males and females in the dimension of education.

Table 4: Mean scores and ranking order of the dimensions of modernization concerning their Literacy

Dimensions of Modernization	Family Heads of the Households of Tiwa Community (Literate=168 and Illiterate=32)					
	Mean		Standard Deviation		Ranking Order	
	Literate	Illiterate	Literate	Illiterate	Literate	Illiterate
Socio-Religious	30.30	26.40	4.24	2.82	III	IV
Marriage	32.01	26.77	4.12	3.02	II	II
Position of Women	33.27	27.67	4.56	3.63	I	I
Education	29.97	25.50	4.55	4.20	IV	III

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows dimension-wise mean score and ranking order between literate and illiterate family heads of the Tiwa people is 30.30 and 26.40 in socio-religious. 32.01 and 26.77 in marriage, 33.27 and 27.67 in the position of women and 29.97

and 25.50 are found in the dimension of education. The ranking order between literate and illiterate counterparts is found similar in marriage and the position of women and different in the dimensions of socio-religious and education.

Table 5: shows the significant difference in the dimensions of modernization concerning their Literacy.

Dimensions of Modernization	Male (N=113)		Female (N= 87)		't'	Remarks
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Socio-Religious	30.30	4.24	26.40	2.82	9.97	Significant
Marriage	32.01	4.12	26.77	3.02	12.77	Significant
Position of Women	33.27	4.56	27.67	3.63	11.54	Significant
Education	29.97	4.55	25.50	4.20	8.11	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 shows the significant difference between literate and illiterate counterparts of the Tiwa community. The study revealed that there is a substantial difference concerning literacy toward all the dimensions of modernization. Hence it can be said that the literacy of people influences the process of modernization. Therefore, there is a need to provide opportunities for the Tiwa people to uplift themselves.

Implications of the Study

This study has important implications for understanding how modernization influences the Tiwa community in Nagaon, Assam, particularly concerning attitudes towards gender, education, and socio-religious aspects. By highlighting the dimensions in which the Tiwa people show the highest and lowest degrees of modernization, the study underscores the need for targeted development interventions. The Tiwa community shows the utmost modernity in attitudes toward the position of women suggesting a shift towards gender equality and inclusivity. Conversely, the lower modernity in

education indicates a significant area for improvement, given that education is crucial for fostering a scientific and progressive outlook. The study also reveals differences in modernization based on literacy and gender, showing that literate individuals and men hold more modern views on socio-religious practices and marriage. These findings suggest that increasing educational opportunities and addressing traditional beliefs through seminars, workshops, and awareness programs may help the Tiwa people adopt a more modern outlook across various dimensions. This research provides actionable insights for social leaders, educators, and policymakers, emphasizing the need for community-based efforts to facilitate meaningful modernization in rural Tiwa society.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, the investigators revealed the modernity in the dimension of modernization. Tiwa people prefer their modernity in the position of women. Comparing the

modernity between males and females shows their preferences in the position of women and socio-religious aspects respectively. However, there is a substantial difference between males and females in the dimension of socio-religious, marriage, and the position of women and similar in the dimension of education. Furthermore, the results of the study show that there are differences in modernity concerning literacy. Tiwa people are the least modern in the dimension of education. We all know that education is a key to changing society. Education has an impact on the rapid development of society by changing the outlook. In Assam, we have also seen that, due to lack of education, there exist various types of superstition and prejudices like “Daini” in our society. Even today people are believed in traditional methods rather than scientific ways. Adopting new values and norms according to the changing society are need of the hour among the people. Therefore conscious efforts should be undertaken like seminars, workshops, awareness camps, etc. by the social leaders, educated people, government, and Tiwa Autonomous Council for the rural Tiwa people to enable them to develop a modern attitude toward education. This research provides actionable insights into social leaders, educators, and policymakers, emphasizing the need for community-based efforts to facilitate meaningful modernization in rural Tiwa society.

Author(s)' Statements on Ethics and Conflict of Interest

Ethics Statement: The investigators declare that the research/publications' ethics are survey-based. The investigators have no conflict of interest.

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