

Cultural Heritage and Psychological Wellbeing: A Pilot Study with PVTG Tribal Students in Namkum, Ranchi

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Abstract

Indigenous groups in India have a lot of cultural traditions and ways of knowing that have a big impact on how people think and feel. Nevertheless, swift modernisation and sociocultural shifts may affect the psychological well-being of these groups. The current pilot study sought to investigate the correlation between cultural engagement, perceived stress, resilience, and subjective well-being among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) adolescents in Namkum, Ranchi. A cross-sectional descriptive design was employed using a purposive sample of 20 tribal pupils. Standardised psychological tests were utilised, including the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10), and the WHO-5 Well-Being Index. Moreover, a limited array of non-standardized, exploratory interview questions were employed to evaluate cultural involvement and perceptions of stress associated with modernisation. The descriptive analysis indicated moderate stress levels ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.07$), varied resilience ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 3.01$), and relatively low subjective well-being ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.22$). Everyone agreed that taking part in cultural activities was good for mental health; however, changes related to modernisation were linked to higher stress levels. The results underscore the significance of culturally informed mental health strategies among tribal groups and establish a basis for extensive research initiatives.

Keywords: PVTG, cultural legacy, perceived stress, resilience, psychological well-being, indigenous knowledge.

Introduction

India's tribal populations embody varied cultural systems distinguished by robust traditions, a collective identity, and indigenous knowledge frameworks. Cultural traditions in indigenous societies frequently serve as protective psychosocial frameworks, promoting a sense of connection, continuity, and emotional regulation (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Bhattacharya & Das, 2019).

Particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) in India face swift sociocultural transformations, marginalisation, and demands of modernisation, potentially undermining community support structures and cultural continuity (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2014). Research has shown that school, society's expectations, and changing lifestyles stress out Indian youth more (Deb, Strodl, & Sun, 2015). Rapid social change can break down traditional community structures, which can make youth feel more stressed and confused about their identity (Berry, 1997).

Cultural heritage significantly influences coping strategies and emotional regulation. Historically, indigenous rituals, festivals, storytelling traditions, and communal healing techniques served as both cultural expressions and collective resilience systems (Ungar, 2011). Studies indicate that robust cultural identification correlates with enhanced resilience and less psychological distress within indigenous communities (Gone, 2013).

In the Indian context, cultural participation and spiritual orientation correlate with psychological well-being, particularly among adolescents and tribal communities (Sinha & Sinha, 2013). Resilience, characterised as the adaptive capacity to navigate adversity, has been demonstrated to moderate stress and is influenced by social support and cultural environments (Gopalakrishnan & Rastogi, 2018).

Standardised instruments like the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983), the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003), and the WHO-5 Well-Being Index (World Health Organization, 1998) have been validated across various cultural populations worldwide; however, their use in Indian tribal contexts is still insufficiently explored.

Although there is growing awareness of indigenous mental health, there is a paucity of empirical research investigating the interplay between cultural engagement, stress, resilience, and well-being among PVTG tribal students in Eastern India.

Since teenagers embody the transitional generation bridging tradition and modernity, the examination of these interactions holds substantial social and psychological significance.

This pilot study investigates the correlation between cultural activity and perceived stress, resilience, and psychological well-being among PVTG students in Namkum, Ranchi.

Objectives of the Study

1. The study aims to assess the levels of perceived stress, resilience, and psychological well-being among PVTG students.
2. The study aims to explore perspectives on cultural engagement and the stress that comes with modernisation.
3. To investigate exploratory correlations between cultural participation and psychological factors.

4.To assess the viability for expanded primary research.

Methodology

Research Design

A cross-sectional descriptive study design was employed. The emphasis of the pilot study was on the first trend analysis and feasibility evaluation.

Participants

The sample comprised N = 20 PVTG tribal students from YBN University, Namkum, Ranchi. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling according to the following criterion: age 18–25 years.

Being part of a tribal community

Currently enrolled as students

Voluntary participation

Participants must be between the ages of 18 and 25.

Tools

1. The PSS-10 is a scale for measuring perceived stress.

The PSS-10 was used to assess perceived stress in daily life. The scale measures how unpredictable, out of control, and overloaded you have felt in the last month. Higher scores mean that people think they are more stressed.

2. Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10)

The CD-RISC-10 was given to measure psychological resilience, which is the ability to handle stress and problems well. Higher scores mean more resilience.

3. WHO-5 Well-Being Scale

The WHO-5 was used to measure psychological well-being in a subjective way, such as mood and energy levels. Higher scores mean greater health.

4. Questions for Cultural Interviews That Aren't Standardised

A limited set of self-constructed, non-standardised interview questions was incorporated to investigate:

Taking part in cultural customs

Healing methods from indigenous cultures

Cultural transformation that people see

Stress from modernisation

Concerns about mental health in the community

These questions were exploratory and not confirmed as a psychometric scale.

Procedure

Participants gave their permission before the data was collected. First, standardised inventories were given, and then cultural interview questions were asked. Help was given when needed to make sure everyone understood in YBN University campus.

Ethical Consideration

It was up to the participants to decide whether or not to take part. People who participated were told they might leave at any time. No diagnostic labelling was performed.

Data Analysis

We figured out descriptive statistics like means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. Because the study was a pilot, the analyses were more about finding trends than running inferential statistical tests.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Statistics that describe stress levels were modest and stayed about the same. Resilience exhibited significant diversity among subjects. Psychological well-being was relatively diminished and variable.

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
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Perceived Stress	5.00	1.07	Moderate to high stress
Resilience	4.78	3.01	Variable coping capacity
Psychological Well-Being	2.25	1.22	Low to moderate well-being

Cultural Findings

Everyone said that being involved in culture is beneficial for their mental health.

Most people said that modernisation made them feel stressed.

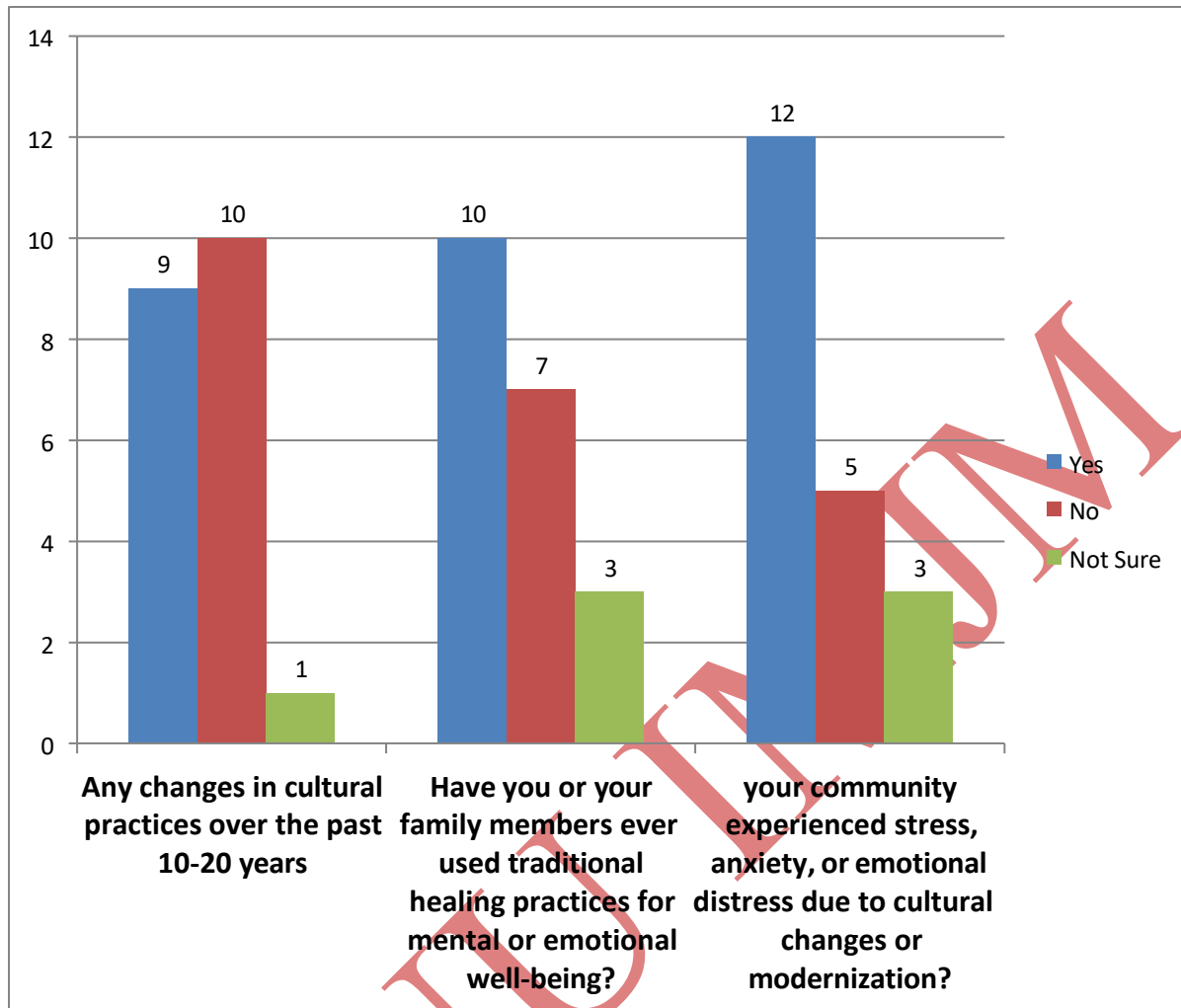
Substance misuse was identified as the principal mental health issue.

People typically only participated in cultural events on occasion, not regularly.

Festivals were the main way that people showed their culture.

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Table -1
Cultural Practices & Traditional Healing Practices.



Associations of Exploratory Patterns

Trends that were seen suggested:

More cultural involvement leads to less stress.

More involvement in culture leads to more strength.

Stress from modernisation leads to worse well-being.

These relationships are preliminary and necessitate inferential validation in subsequent study.

Discussion

Cultural engagement as a psychological resource that protects you

The consensus that cultural participation enhances mental and emotional well-being underscores culture as a safeguarding psychological resource. Even if people didn't participate regularly, it seems that occasional participation was enough to give them emotional stability, a sense of belonging, and a sense of identity.

This corroborates indigenous psychology viewpoints that regard culture not alone as tradition but as a functional coping mechanism.

Stress, Modernisation, and Cultural Transition

The moderate mean stress score ($M = 5.00$) and substantial support for modernization-related distress indicate that fast sociocultural change has caused psychological strain. Stress seems to be collective rather than individual, and it comes from:

Deterioration of conventional values

Confusion about who you are

Changing ways of living

More use of drugs

This corresponds with the conclusion that substance misuse developed as the predominant mental health issue, serving as a maladaptive coping mechanism in the absence of secure cultural moorings.

Resilience as an Inconsistent and Variable Resource

Resilience had the highest standard deviation ($SD = 3.01$), signifying disparate coping abilities within the group. Some people have very good adaptive functioning, while others have a lot of trouble with it.

This uneven distribution of resilience shows that:

The mechanisms of cultural resilience are diminishing.

This may hinder the transfer of coping strategies across generations.

Enhancing culturally rooted resilience may mitigate stress effects.

Psychological Well-Being: Unstable and Vulnerable

The ratings for psychological well-being were rather low ($M = 2.25$), suggesting that well-being is not constant but rather episodic. The research indicates that resilience is not adequately mitigating stress, particularly in the face of modernisation pressures.

This makes it even more important for:

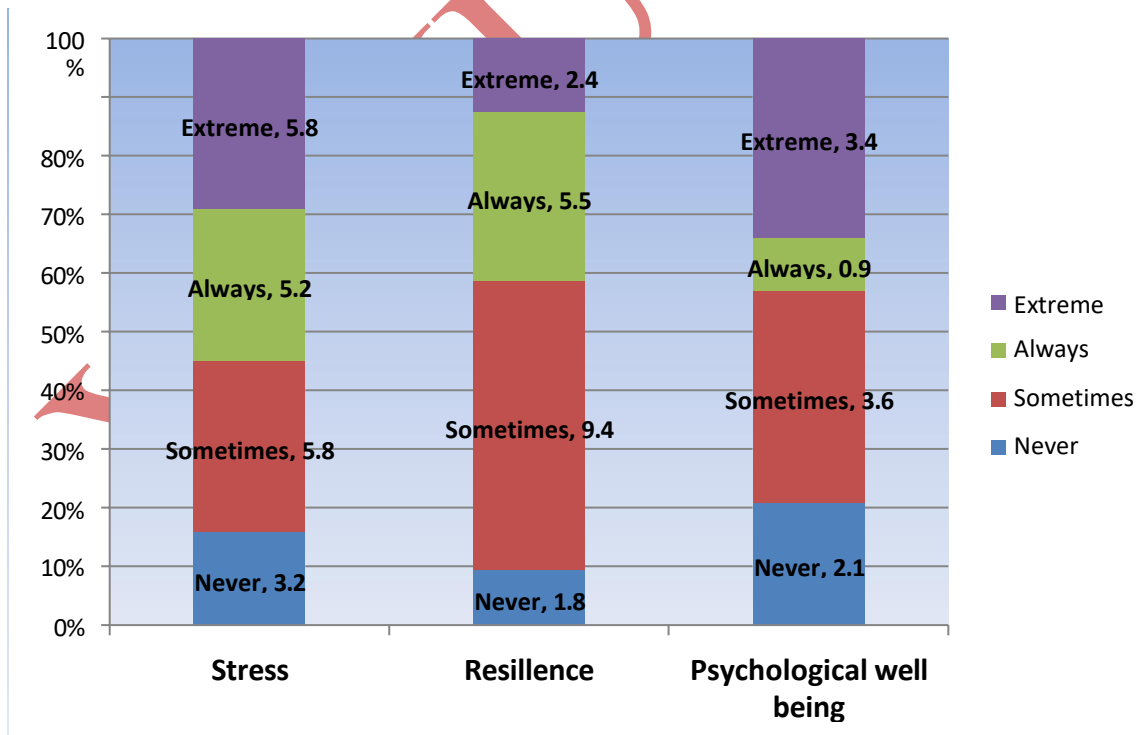
Preventive strategies for mental health

Cultural revitalisation as a method for improving mental health

Psychosocial interventions in the community

Table -2.

Data on Stress, Resilience, and Psychological Well-Being with corresponding values.



Each bar represents the distribution of responses for each category.

When there is Stress: A Growing Concern the first category examined is stress. The data reveals that a significant portion of the population experiences stress regularly, with the following distribution:

- 1. Extreme stress: 5.8%
- 2. Always stressed: 5.2%
- 3. Sometimes stressed: 5.8%
- 4. Never stressed: 3.2%

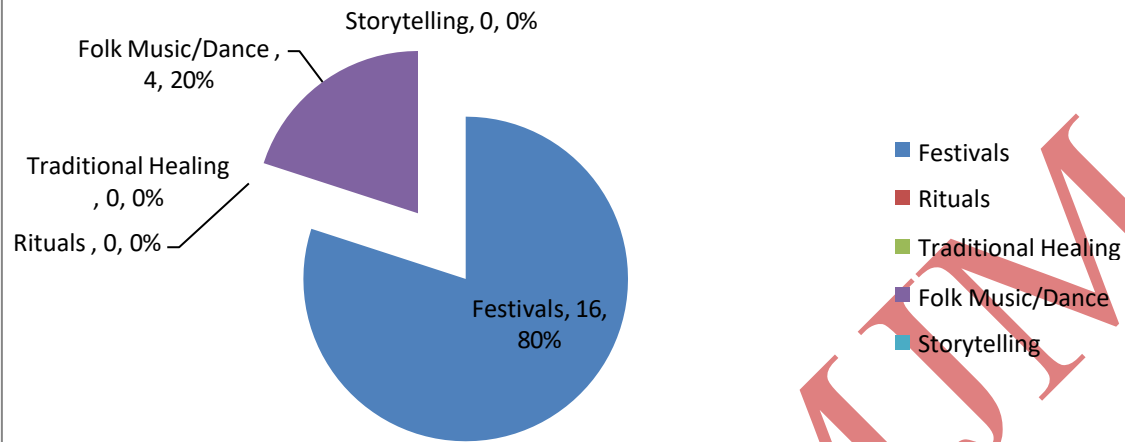
The majority of individuals report experiencing stress, with 16.8% experiencing it either "extremely" or "always." An additional 5.8% admit to feeling stressed "sometimes," making stress a prevalent issue. However, a relatively small percentage (3.2%) report never experiencing stress, highlighting the impact that modern life may have on mental well-being.

Overall Interpretation

Table -3

Traditional cultural elements

Important traditions followed in your community



Distribution of Traditions

- Festivals:** 16 responses (80%)
- Folk Music/Dance:** 4 responses (20%)
- Rituals:** 0 responses (0%)
- Traditional Healing:** 0 responses (0%)
- Storytelling:** 0 responses (0%)

Cultural involvement leads to increased resilience, which leads to less perceived stress and better mental health. On the other hand, modernisation and cultural disruptions lead to more stress, less resilience, and worse mental health.

The consistency among cultural and psychological factors enhances the internal coherence of this pilot study, even in the absence of inferential statistics.

The results show that cultural participation acts as a protective psychosocial factor for PVTG students. Even infrequent engagement in traditions seems to improve mental stability and resilience.

Changes related to modernisation were often linked to stress, which suggests that changes in identity and culture may make people more mentally vulnerable.

Some students can handle stress alone, while others need more help. Psychological well-being seemed unstable and fragile, underscoring the necessity for culturally informed mental health interventions.

The results back up a conceptual pathway:

Engaging with culture leads to more resilience, less stress, and better health.

This pilot study highlights the necessity of including indigenous cultural frameworks in mental health research and intervention strategies.

Limitations

Small pilot sample (N = 20)

Only descriptive analysis

Measures of self-report

Design with cross-sections.

Utilisation of non-standardised cultural enquiries

Standardised instruments created in non-tribal settings

Future Directions

Bigger samples from more than one community

Statistical analysis that draws conclusions (correlation, regression)

Longitudinal study

Creation of culturally tailored evaluation instruments

Combining qualitative narrative inquiry

Conclusion

The current pilot study underscores the relationship between cultural heritage and psychological well-being among PVTG students. Cultural participation seems like a way to safeguard oneself, while changes associated with modernisation may make people more stressed and mentally weak. Enhancing cultural continuity may thus be essential in fostering resilience and mental well-being within tribal societies.

As a preliminary study, the current research stresses descriptive and exploratory analysis. The results offer preliminary support for culturally based hypotheses, which will be evaluated by inferential statistics in the principal study with more extensive samples.

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