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1. Ritual Beliefs and Practices for Curing Disease/Illness among Tribes: A study of Mandla District in Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

Tribes are strongly connected with ritual and cultural activities. They follow and practices it strongly. These activities and practices are the one of the ray of hope for curing disease/illness and other internal health problems. Tribes believe on magic and mystical power for becoming morbid and falling ill/sickness. In this regard, this study is conducted to know ritual and cultural practices for curing diseases/illness among tribes of Mandla District in Madhya Pradesh. A primary field survey was conducted from August to November, 2019 for this study. In this study, total 300 respondents were interviewed from tribal communities with the applying purposive sampling method. For this study, the tribal respondent were interviewed from tribal dominated villages. All selected villages had more than 90% of tribal households, located in hilly and forest areas. An open ended schedule was used along with in-depth interviews of local ritual and cultural knowledgeable person who is knows 'Panda/Guniya/Sela' at their locality. The study found that ritual practices such as 'Jhad-Fuk' is common among tribes for curing disease and health problem. They always prefer this technique for some of the particular diseases, and illnesses such as Smallpox, snake biting, and epilepsy, jaundice, body pains and other happening health problems in the family.

Key Word: *Ritual Practices, Supernatural power, Witchcraft, Bijadandi, Mandla, Madhya Pradesh*

Introduction

Tribes are still believing and have a deep perception on magic and mystical power for becoming morbid and falling ill in the family. Tribes believe on magic and supernatural power, if they get suddenly ill/disease or any health issue. The tribal lives in the naturally bound region/area. They know

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as people of god/nature, castes of forests, vanvasi (inhabitants of forest), pahari (hill dwellers), adimjati (original community/primitive people), adivasi (first settlers), janjati (folk people), anusuchit janjati (schedule tribes), and so on (Vidyarthi & Rai, 1977).

For several decades, tribes believe in taboo, magic, sorcery, breach of taboo, intrusion of disease object, intrusion of disease-causing spirit, loss of soul, and supernatural power for causes of illness for which usually they use '*Jhad-fuk*' or ritual activities for treatment which gained by their forefathers (Pattnaik et al. 1980; Panigrahi, 2016). Tribal peoples are still believing in animal's '*Bali*' such as Goat, Pig, Hen, Colorful cock and Birds as ritual practices for curing diseases. This way of curing or practice always comes from ritual mysticism, supernatural power, and magic, often resulting in specific magic-religious rites (Balgir, 1997).

According to Kar and Juri (1993), the indigenous practices, herb uses, taboos, and superstition are the determining factors of health services utilization and status among the tribal groups. Cultural determinants also influence health and modern healthcare services utilization. Of which it is varying culture to culture and communities to communities in tribal and vulnerable groups because culture is a base of their health and treatment process. Beyond the cultural determinants, some other socio-economic, cultural, and demographic determinants like education, food habits, taboos and superstition, socio-religious beliefs and practices, indigenous care system, income, communication and transportation, socio-biological practices, ecology, and genetics attributes to influence the indigenous health and healthcare practices (Mitra, 2000; Das, 2004). A study has shown that knowledge, beliefs, techniques, roles, norms, values, ideologies, attitudes, customs, rituals, and symbols which is related to health and disease (Ali, 1996). sorcery, breach of taboo, intrusion of disease object, intrusion of disease, sprit and loss of soul are the main causes for falling ill sometimes Some perception have been observed among tribes which are responsible factor to become morbid and illness in which (Panigrahi, 2016). In India, communities that attribute health problems to deviations from customs and social norms, taboo breaks and the punishment of evil spirits (Mukherjee 2003). Most of the tribes in Andhra Pradesh in practiced traditional medicines such as herbals and psychological treatments (Varadarajan,

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et al., 2010). The common beliefs, customs, traditions, values and practices connected with their health and disease have been closely associated with the treatment of diseases. Chaudhary and Singh (2006) observed a similar narrative made by the local medicine man which inhibit patient to approach modern health institution at the earliest. The healer narrated: "If somebody is bitten by scorpion, crushed *kapur* is applied on the bitten part to remove poison. If it fails, which usually does not, then "*jhar-phuk*" technique is used. If bitten by snake like Kobra, Kaili, Padmani and Patalhari, both *jhar-phuk* technique and very small tablet made out of poisonous kalihari kund is taken with water. If it fails then only patient is brought to hospital

Adopted Method and Methodology

The study was carried out in Bijadandi block in Mandala District of Madhya Pradesh. According the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2006 named Mandla one of the countries's most backward districts (out of a total of 640) and received fund from the Backward Regions Grant Fund Programme (BRGF). Moreover, a report on "District Development and Diversity Index Report for India and Major States" was brought out in 2015 in which provided 20 low (Bottom) economic index districts from the country in which Mandla district was one of them from Madhya Pradesh (Sharrif, 2015). Mandla is (57%) forth highest tribal populated district and backward district districts in the Madhya Pradesh. Within district, Bijadandi developmental blocks was finalized for the study, since it is most tribal dominated block with having 82 percent tribal population in Mandla District¹. However, the villages were selected based on distance of villages from Community Health Center (CHC). In this regard, Villages falling within 15 km from CHC with having more than 75 % of tribal population were selected for this study to understand the ritual and cultural treatment seeking behaviors practices among tribes of this block.

A primary field survey was conducted during August to November, 2019 to find the way of ritual and cultural healthcare practices during illness. In this study, the sample of 300 respondents were interviewed from tribal communities from the study area with the applying purposive sampling method. In this study total 149 male and 151 female respondents were participated with their written

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consent. The inclusion criteria of the respondent were the age 18 and above, having highest level of education in the household and those who were present at home with having age 18 and above. For the additional information, field notes and important points were recorded during the survey.

This study is based on qualitative research approach which is based on the analysis of information, received from the respondents. However, the purposive sampling method was used for conducting this study. Moreover, Interviews guides were prepared with open-ended questions as a tools of data collection. The in-depth interviews of key informant were also done with traditional healers, located at their local areas to gain insights into the way of ritual and cultural practices for healthcare during ill. The interviews of "Panda/Gunia" were also conducted who provides and practices ritual activities among the tribal areas.

Result

Name of Sampled tribal Households

In this study, 300 households were interviewed to the tribal communities through the purposive sampling method.

Table 1 reveals the interviewed tribal groups. A total of 39 tribal groups were interviewed during this study. Among 39 tribal groups, nine tribal groups are more concentrated in the study area, which contributed nearly three-fifths (66.3%) of the total interviewed tribal groups. Maravi (14.7%), Uikey (13%), Markam (8.7%), Parte (7.3%), and Urreti (6.7) tribal groups are dominating in the study area. However, the Maravi tribe is dominating than other tribal groups.

Household Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2 provides the socio-economic and demographic characteristics respondents. The 30-40 age group's respondents were more participated in this study, while the lowest was from the age 70 & above (5%). Likewise, female were high (51%) than male respondents (49%). Around 37% of respondents were uneducated, while around 6% had graduation and above level education. On the other hand, half the respondents were from the agriculture (50%) sector followed by wage-labored

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(33%). Very few respondents were from the government and private jobholders. Out of the total respondent, 78% respondent was married, and 11% were unmarried. Most of the respondents are nuclear families (73%). As per their area wise location, more than half of the respondents living in forest (55%), while around one-fifth (26%) living in hilly areas. Most of the respondents' houses are Kaccha (82%) and use firewood for cooking at their homes. Although, three-fourths (75%) of tribes depend on hand pumps for drinking and cooking water. Nearly 3% are using boiled drinking water. In the context of the ration card, the study has found three types of cardholders: yellow, blue, and white, in which yellow and blue card holder households considered as Below Poverty Line (BPL) and white cardholder are considered as Above Poverty Line (APL) households. The study found 21% yellow cardholder, 64% blue cardholders and 85% BPL household. Among the surveyed households, only 82% had a toilet facility at their home.

Ritual Beliefs and Practices for Curing Disease/Illness and Health Problems

This study found that around 83% (250) of households who believe in '*Jhad-fuk*' ritual activities for curing of diseases and illness, when they do not get relief from allopathic treatment. Usually, this '*Jhad-fuk*' practice always done by the person who is ritually more knowledgeable in the village (Fig.02)

Reason for Practicing '*Jhad-Fuk*'

Table 3 provides the detail about the reason for practicing '*Jhad-Fuk*' which may also be the reason for not availing modern healthcare services by tribes in the study area. These reasons are only applied to tribal people, even it is also for non-tribal peoples those who are living along with them in the same village. Although, 54% of tribal respondents said that they use '*Jhad-Fuk*' because they 'believe more in '*Jhad-fuk*', while another side 29% said that they use when do 'not get relief from allopathic'.

Reason for Being Illness/Sickness

The three ritual reasons and perceptions are given by tribes for being illness. Among them, one is '*Jadu Tona*' which is a common reason. Another is '*Najar lagna*' and third is supernatural power etc. The '*Jadu Tona*', '*Najar lagna*' and *Ghost or Supernatural Power/Devine Power* are ritually related

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to being an illness/disease that is cured by *Jhad-Fuk* activities only, said tribes. Moreover, they have said that allopathic treatment does not work on it, if that problems are caused by these three reasons.

'Jadu-Tona' (Witchcraft)

Witchcraft is a concept that is a method for curing among tribes, when a person sick or ill. This '*Jadu-Tona*' (Witchcraft) is used when a person is neither cured by allopathic nor with home remedies. This is performed by a local or neighboring ritually knowledgeable person so-called *Panda* or '*Gunia*' who flickers (*Jhad-Fuk*). The '*Panda or Gunia*' sees the palm of patients like an astrologer and tells him/her that someone has fired witchcraft on it.

"Nazar Lagana"

Eye sighting (*Nazar Lagana*) is also considered to be a reason for getting sick/ill which is mostly occurred among below five children. This is one kind of black magic like (*Jadu-Tona*). For this kind of problem, tribal use some ritual activities such as '*Najar Utara*' by soil at home by themselves.

Supernatural Power or Devine Power

The supernatural power is also considered a big reason for being sick or ill among tribes, stated by tribes in the study area. Ghosting or witching are comes under supernatural power. These powers recognize by '*Panda or Gunia*' and play some magician role to remove this power from the patient.

Around 48% of tribal respondents reported that they suffers from health problems due to '*Jadu Tona*' (witchcraft), done by someone, which is cured by '*Jhad-Fuk*' only. On the other hand, 19% of the respondents have said that children or family members get sick due to their eyesight (*Nazar lagana*). Apart from these, supernatural power is also one of the most important reasons which includes ghosting or witching. More than three-fifths (69%) respondents have revealed about supernatural power, which worsens the health of the tribal area or non-tribal as well.

"Pand/Gunia" who Practicing Ritual Activities for Illness/Disease in the Village

The ritual and cultural activities providers knows as "*Panda/Gunia*" in the tribal area who provides '*Jhad-Fuk*'. These "*Pand/Gunia*" do the '*Jhad-Fuk*' for the almost all kind of internal problems and

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other diseases, caused due to '*Najar Lagana* (Evil-eye)', supernatural power and '*Jadutona* (Whichcraft)'. These "Pand/Gunia" provide '*Jhad-Fuk*' for all villager Other than tribal peoples also. Still, they have strong believe on these kind of ritual and cultural activities. Every village have "*Panda/Gunia*". It is also found that the head of "*Panda/Gunia*" will be form tribal community only who do '*Nikasi*' of the village'. '*Nikasi*' is a tribal ritual activities for curing the all villages from external forces likes ghost's power on villagers. This '*Nikasi*', doing every year in the end of Hindi month that is '*Savan*',. In this '*Nikasi*', process, the all villager clean their house and keep one clay pot in a distance from village along with one old broom.

The '*Jhad-Fuk*' practitioner get training from their forefather. Some of them also claim that they have got this specialty of curing as god gift. They believe that their community's Devi (goddess) / Devta (gods) get angry which becomes the causes of the illness. Then their communities's "*Panda/Gunia*" pray at temple for curing diseases/illness. For this '*Jhad-ful*', "*Panda/Gunia*" takes some items likes coconuts, local wines, colorful chickens, incense sticks and goats for giving to their '*Kul* (Communities)' Devi (goddess) / Devta (gods) for protecting form being sick, diseases and falling ill.

The items, taking by *Panda/Guniya* for practicing '*Jhad-Fuk*'?

The '*panda/guniya*' takes some items for practicing '*Jhad-Fuk*' at villages and in neighboring villages for curing of disease or ill health. The 96% respondents said that *Panda/Guniya*' takes items for '*Jhad-Fuk*', while only 4% (10 respondents) said that they do not take anything for practicing '*Jhad-Fuk*' if any member has fallen ill (Table 05).

Further table 06 provided the list of items taken by '*Panda/Guniya*' after '*Jhad-fuk*'. The item such as Incense stick/Coconuts, chicken, goat, money, pig, and alcohol which is asked by '*Panda/Guniya*' after '*Jhad-fuk*'. Among the listed items, incense stick/coconuts (88%), chicken (43%), alcohol (36%) and money (25%) are the common items which are demanded by '*Panda/Guniya*' for '*Jhad-Fuk*' and diseased person's family member and they offer these items happily to '*Panda/Guniya*'. The '*Panda/Guniya*' also asked for alive chicken, pig, and a goat after being cured for giving '*Bali*' of these animals to their traditional god/goddess. Thus, 88% of respondents revealed that scent

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sticks/coconuts takes by 'Panda/Guniya' for 'Jhad-Fuk' while nearly 25% said that they take money also along with other items.

Ritual practices for some particulars Illness or Diseases by tribes

This section is provided the detail of some ritual activities which use or practice for some of the particular diseases, illnesses, and or injuries as provided below. Smallpox, snake biting, and epilepsy are the three most common problems among tribes for which they follow some ritual practices to overcome the problems. Under ritual activities, they prefer 'Jhad-Fuk' and 'Pooja-Path' techniques. However, the activities for these particulars problem have been given below with details for curing the problem.

Small Pox

Tribal consider smallpox as a kind of divine power and they have said that this smallpox happens to those on whom this goddess is happy. More than 95% of tribal has reported that they follow certain ritual activities and practices during this problem. They follow the practices like-

- Mother of the patient or head of household take early morning bath every day and offering water to "Kher Mata" which known as villages goddess of tribal. And this practice is done for 7-9 consecutive days.
- The women of the house, worship the tree of 'Peepal', during a small pox household members
- Oily food or non-veg are not allowed in the home during this smallpox. And if you do so, smallpox becomes more visible and remains for a long time as said by tribes.
- Till the patient is cured, 'Neem' leaf is placed around his/her bed.
- After cured, offering coconuts fruits to "Kher Mata" and to everyone has to feed at home after recovering
- Women cannot bring water from the tap or well together in two pots by placing it on her head.
- Tribes have perception that if they do not follow precautions, the goddess can get angry and remain for a long time.

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Snake Biting

When a snake bites in the tribal area, first they use the 'Jhad-Fuk' and then go for allopathic treatment. The people believe that the poison does not spread throughout the body due to the 'Jhad-Fuk' and this way of practice is also reduce the chance of death. They believe that the 'panda' who do 'Jhad-Fuk' binds the poison with his divine power, so that the poison does not spread to the whole body. The 'panda' also brings out the poison from his mouth by 'Jhad-Fuk'. Moreover, when the person is cured by 'Jhad-Fuk', that person comes with his/her family to the 'panda's' home for worships his god. This is organized on the day of the festival celebrated by the tribal peoples which are known as 'Rishi Panchami'

"During this study, one festival was observed among tribal peoples which is celebrating by tribes when a person cured by 'Jhad-Fuk' whom snake has bitten. It is self-observed during field work in tribal area. "I was there on this celebration day in the tribal village and participated also in this program". I have asked a local tribes to explain about this festival and program, which was well explained by that person. He said that this festival celebrating by tribes for worshiping snakes which are celebrated on 'Rishi Panchami'. In this festival, the worship is done for snakes, because these snakes are considered to be the form of Lord Shankar. This festival is celebrated with the belief that if snakes bites to someone and the 'Panda' do 'Jhad-Fuk' in his name, the poison does not spread in the whole body. This festival is celebrated every year on the fifth day of 'Bhadra' of Hindi month or August of English month. On this day, all the tribal people from around the place gather in the house of the main panda who do 'Jhad-Fuk'. In addition to the main panda, other 7 more pandas are presented there, those who are the disciples of the main panda. All these 'Panda' worship of snakes, according to their customers by putting a photo of the snake and offer milk, incense sticks, coconut fruits etc. They sing some local songs in their local language which are related to the god/goddess so that all the 'Pandas' present with 'Bhanv' and all the 'Pandas' walk like snakes during 'Bhanv'. The person who was bitten by the snake is seated in front of 'Panda', who is healed by the 'Jhad-Fuk'. However, the person has again 'Jhad-Fuk' and expressed the process of getting poison from the mouth by 'Pandas'. A photo of this scene was also taken by me, which is attached below".

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The tribe also use traditional medicine for snake biting. Generally, traditional healer provide snake biting traditional medicine who are living in the village or around the village. Traditional healer first ties a tight knot above the wound to stop spreading of poison in the body. They also cut the bitten part to remove the poison blood and then applied some traditional or herbal plant based paste as per availability in the locality.

Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a life-threatening disease that affect a part of the body and that part becomes completely useless and weak. However, tribes go for '*Jhad-Fuk*' firstly for Epilepsy before allopathic and home remedies.

Here, I am going to explain about special ritual practices and activities for Epilepsy, done by tribes. There is one goddess temple in their locality in middle of the forest. This temple name is '*Banjari Mata*' and there is a priest in this temple. Tribes go there to take '*Jhad-Fuk*' for epilepsy. This '*Banjari Mata*' is one of the main goddesses of the tribes, which is considered to be the goddess of epilepsy for tribes and non-tribes as well as. The priest who is also known as '*Panda*', belongs to the tribal community and do '*Jhad-Fuk*' for epilepsy problems. This '*Panda/Poojari*' makes a promises the people that if the patient is cured, then you have to offer something and people accept it. Sometimes this promise also makes by family members of patient himself. And after cured, they follow as earlier said by himself or by '*Panda/Poojari*'.

One more ritual epilepsy technique are found during this survey. The tribal peoples cuts the little finger of left hand of patient and put near to the nose, if get first time this epilepsy problem. They have said that by blood smelling, patient get cured immediately, said by tribes of studied area.

Conclusion

The ritual practices is an important aspect for tribal area for curinh ill health and diseases. Tribes strongly believe in ritual practices i.e. "*Jhad-Fuk*" and they always prefer this technique for some of the particular diseases, and illnesses such as Smallpox, snake biting, and epilepsy, jaundice, body

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pains and other happening health problems in the family. Although, this study found that more than three fifth (83%) tribes go for '*Jhad-Fuk*' and other ritual activities for curing health sickness/illness and diseases. However, 54% tribal prefer '*Jhad-Fuk*' because they 'believe more in '*Jhad-fuk*', while 29% said that they prefer when do not get relief from allopathic'. Tribes have perception that '*Jadu Tona*', '*Najar lagna*' and supernatural power are main causes for being illness and morbid. However, they have perception that some of the diseases/illness are curable by the '*Jhad-Fuk*' only such as smallpox and they never go for allopathic treatment for small pox. They consider to smallpox as a God/Goddess and they practice ritual activities for 7 days for curing this at their home.

Overall, this study found that tribe continues practicing their forefather ritual and cultural activities for curing disease and illness.

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Conflict of interest

It is certified that author do not have any conflict of interest with respect to the publication of this manuscript and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical Clearance

Ethical clearance prior to data collection was obtained from the Student Research Ethics Committee of the Institute. Written and verbal informed consent was obtained from the participants and assured confidentiality and informed that the survey data would be used for research purposes only.

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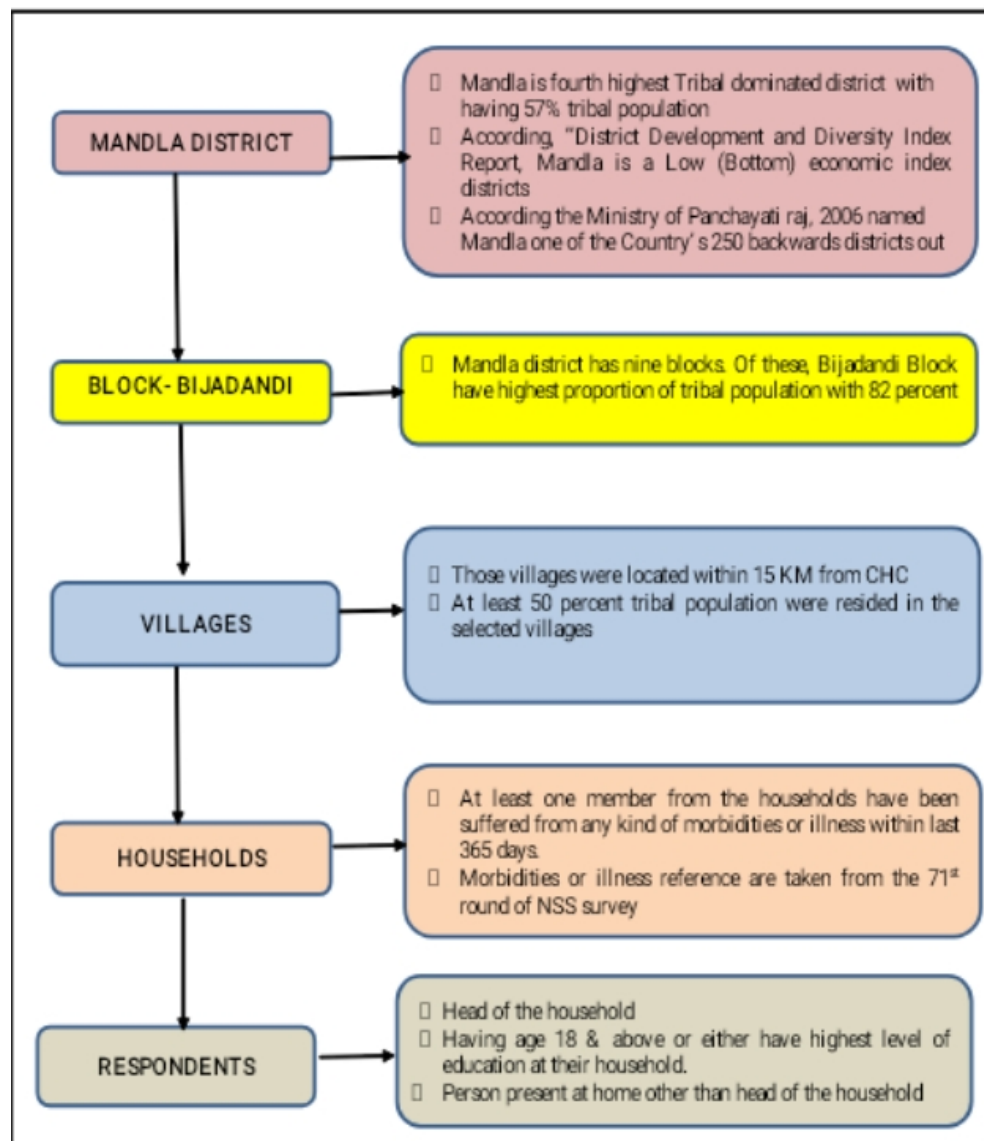
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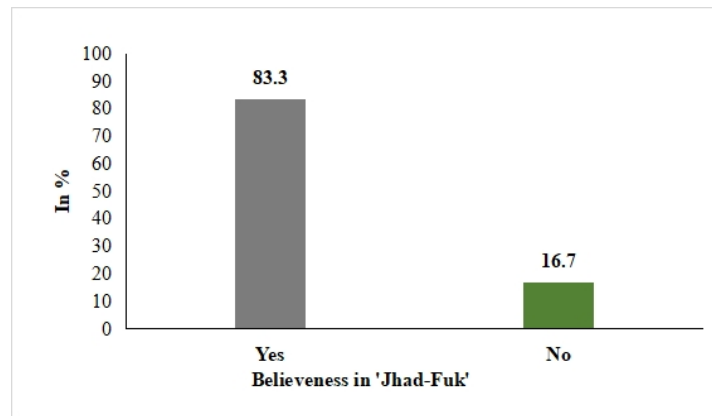
Figures and Graphs

Figure 01: Methodological Framework for Field Work



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Figure 2: 'Jhad-Fuk' practices among tribes in Bijadandi Block



Source: Based on Field Survey, Aug-Nov., 2019

Tables

Table 01: Interviewed Tribal Groups in the studied area

Name of Tribes	No. of H.H.s	Percent
Maravi	44	14.7
Uikey	39	13.0
Markam	26	8.7
Parte	22	7.3
Urreti	20	6.7
Baiga	15	5.0
Marko	14	4.7
Narreti	11	3.7
Vadkade	11	3.7
Other Tribes	98	32.7
Total	300	100.0

Source: Based on Field Survey, Aug-Nov., 2019

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Table 02: Socio-Economics and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Percentage	Total Number
Age Group		
18- 24	17.7	53
25-29	14.0	42
30-39	20.7	62
40-49	20.3	61
50-59	13.0	39
60-69	9.0	27
70 & above	5.3	16
Sex		
Male	49.7	149
Female	50.3	151
Level of Education		
No. education	36.7	110
Primary Level	18.7	56
Middle Level	14.7	44
High School	14.7	44
Higher Secondary	9.3	28
Graduation & Above	6.0	18
Occupation of Head of HHs		
No Occupation	5.7	17
Farmer	49.7	149
Wages of Labor Worker	33.3	100
Govt. Job	3.0	9
Private Job	1.3	4
House Wife	3.3	10

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Others	3.7	11
Marital Status		
Unmarried	11.3	34
Married	78.3	235
Widowed	10.3	31
Types of Family		
Nuclear	72.7	218
Joint	27.3	82
Types of Location		
Hilly	55.3	166
Plain	18.7	56
Forest	26.0	78
Types of House		
Pucca	13.3	40
Semi Pucca	5.0	15
Kachcha	81.7	245
Types of Fuel		
Dung cake	1.0	3
Fire Wood	86.0	258
LPG	13.0	39
Source of Drinking Water		
Tap	17.3	52
Hand Pump	75.7	227
Well	2.7	8
Tube well	3.3	10
Others	1.0	3
Purification of Water		
Boil	2.7	8

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Filter	4.7	14
Drink as it is	92.7	278
Holding of BPL Card		
Yes	85.3	256
No	14.7	44
Economic Status		
Yellow Card	21.3	64
Blue Card	64.0	192
White/No Card	14.7	44
Toilet Facility at Home		
Yes	82.7	248
No	17.3	52
Water Available for Toilet Facility at Home		
Yes	62.7	188
No	37.3	112
Total Number	100.0	300

Source: Based on Field Survey, Aug-Nov., 2019

Table 03: Reason for practicing of 'Jhad-Fuk' by Tribes

Reasons for Practicing of 'Jhad-Fuk'	Percent	Total
Believe in 'Jhad-fuk'	54.3	163
Believe, but when do not get relief from allopathic	29.0	87
Total	83.3	250

Source: Based on Field Survey, Aug-Nov., 2019

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Table 04: Ritual beliefs for Being Illness among tribes

Reasons for Illness	Percent	Total (N=300)
<i>Jadu Tona</i>	48.0	144
<i>Najar Lagana</i>	18.7	56
<i>Ghost or Supernatural Power/Devine Power</i>	69.3	208

Source: Based on Field Survey, Aug-Nov., 2019

Table 05: Item taking by *Panda/Guniya* for '*Jhad-fuk*'

Item taking for ' <i>Jhad-fuk</i> '	Percent	Total (N=250)
Yes	96.0	240
No	4.0	10
Total	100	250

Source: Based on Field Survey, Aug-Nov., 2019

Table 06: Name of Items taking by *Panda/Guniya* for '*Jhad-fuk*'

Name of Items		Total (N=240)
Scent Stick/Coconuts	87.9	211
Money	24.6	59
Chicken (Murga)	46.3	111
Goat (Bakara)	3.8	9
Pig	6.3	15
Alcohol	36.3	87

Source: Based on Field Survey, Aug-Nov., 2019