

DISEASE PERCEPTION AND HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG HALBA OF CHHATTISGARH

Dr. Sampada Bais Kashyap^{1*}, Ms. Subhi lakhera²

^{1*}Assistant Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, Govt. J.Y.Chhattisgarh College, Raipur (Chhattisgarh),
E-mail-baissampada29@ gmail.com

²M.Sc., Dept. of Anthropology, Govt. J.Y.Chhattisgarh College, Raipur (Chhattisgarh)

**Corresponding author:*

Abstract

Chhattisgarh is tribal dominated State. Tribes constitute approximately 31.5% part of total state population. There is around 42 types of tribe and 5 PVTGs in Chhattisgarh (Census of C.G., 2011). Tribe's habitat and daily life need depend upon forest, not only economically, but they are show socio-cultural association with forest. Health seeking behavior among tribals influence by some common belief, practices and culture. The present study is conducted among Halba tribes of Chhattisgarh.

Keywords: *Health seeking behavior, illness, Halba, beliefs, disease treatment*

INTRODUCTION

Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of any disease (WHO, 1980). In common concept, health refers to the total fitness of an individual that would ensure performance of social roles to an individual's optimum efficiency. Disease is a form of pathological problem while illness is a manifestation of that pathology. However, the perception of health, well-being and illness varies across culture (Sonowal & Panch, 2021). When the concept of health among tribal community is concerned it covers a much broader canvas encompassing the social fabric, assets and dependents apart from the individual (Joshi, 2019). Tribal health is amalgamated with their environment, social structure and culture practices. So, tribal health has been major concern for researcher and scholar.

The status of tribal health in India is very poor and is affected by the general widespread poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, lack of safe drinking water and unhygienic living conditions (Singh, 2008). Tribal health is closely related to culture, environment and social structure as can be observe from the cultural and medical system in their classification of diseases and its aetiology making "health, diseases and medicine" as inseparably linked with their social relationship and magico-religious world (Kaushal, 2004). According to Sonowal and Praharaj, 2007, most tribal community define health, medical care and aetiology of disease in relation to social context. Health care system of a community is important because health problems and their care are strongly influenced by complex socio-cultural factor help in implementation of health services (Basu 1996). According to Sharma, 2004, Beliefs, customs and practices determine the health seeking behaviour of tribal and health status are indicated by social and economic condition, housing, dietary habits, socio-religious practices, taboos and superstitions.

Now-days world of globalization accompanied by generation of mass awareness through media and communication the tribal people have come to closer the main stream society and system. The unprecedented wave of non-traditional elements entering into their social and cultural life. It not only affected their economy, social- cultural life and health care system. Thus putting their traditional health care system into a complex situation of medical plurism (Sonowal & Praharaj, 2007). Tribes seem to be taking a turn towards modern medicine system although they have faith in traditional medicine system. All over, factors that affect health seeking behaviour of tribal people have been analyzed by researchers in different part of India and it reveals that tribal health and health Seeking behavior influenced by multiple factors: these are socio-cultural, magico-religious, beliefs and tradition, illiteracy and unawareness (Singh, 2008), non-availability of herbal and medicinal plants and accessibility and affordability of modern medical system.

Methodology

Present study based on field-work method carried out among Halba tribe of Pond Village in Gariyaband district of Chhattisgarh State. Schedule, in-depth interview, Focus group discussion used to collect quantitative and qualitative primary data. Total 100 Halba households covered for data collection through purposive sampling. Information related to disease prevalence, causes of diseases, mode of treatment and choice for treatment preference asked during household survey.

Objectives:

The study has been conducted to explore perception of diseases and illness and understand the healthcare seeking behavior among Halba of Pond Village, Gariyaband district, Chhattisgarh.

Area and Population

Pond village is located in Chhura Tehsil of Gariaband district, with total 719 households. Total population is 3248 (Census 2011). It is situated 25km away from sub-district headquarter Chhura and 45km away from Capital headquarter Raipur. Facilities of road transportations and railway are easily accessible to villagers. Village have a primary health centre and Government schools up to high school. Total population of Halba is 747. Scheduled tribe constitutes 23.25% of total population and dominated by Halba tribe in village. Literacy rate is of Village is 75.5%.

Halba is one of the major tribe of Chhattisgarh concentrated in Bastar, Dhamtari, Kanker and Dantewada district. It constitutes 5% of total tribal population of Chhattisgarh. They considered themselves as descents of lord krishan and originate from "*Hal (Plough)*" of lord Balram, So they know as *Halba* means originate from hal. Halba divided into two sub groups: *surait (Marathiya Halba)* and *Purait (Bastariha Halba)*. They used Halbi dialect which comes under Indo Aryan Language family, traditional occupation of Halba is agriculture they have a glorious history and unique culture. Halba is one of the progressive tribe of Chhattisgarh.

Findings

The health-seeking behaviour of a community can be understood as sets of practices and behaviours which the individual or a group of individuals of that particular community follow to seek relief from a health problem. Health culture, more so in tribal communities, has been known to play an important role in defining and guiding these practices and behaviours.

Causes of Disease and illness

Halba considered that causes of all diseases and illness is due to **Physical or natural factors** and **spiritual factors**. Natural causes of disease influenced by environment factors, some are: *Jar* (Fever), *Sardi, Khasi* (cold, cough), *sakkar bimari* (diabetes), *Ankhi nai dikhana* (blindness) etc. Generally natural causes of disease associated with physical activity of human body and symptoms are: fluctuate body temperature, continuous weakness and lazy –ness, Breathing

difficulties, body ache, fatigue, indigestion etc. Whereas spiritual Causes of disease associated with cultural beliefs and influenced by evil spirits as well as ignorance of deities, some are: *Paret dharna* (captured by evil spirit), *garbh girn* (Abortion), *Mata aana* (small pox), *Galua* (mumps), *kasraha* (Najar badha) etc. spiritual disease associated with both physical and psychological reactions like: Anxiety, laziness, shivering of body parts, loudly laughing, aggressiveness, fluctuation in body temperature etc.

Health-Care Seeking Behaviour among Halba

This study reveals prevalence of some common natural diseases among Halba population, these are Cold 23%, cough 10%, fever 14%, Skin diseases 2%, Asthama (*sans bimari*) 2%, Joint Pain (*Jod Pirana*) 2%, Diabetes 4%, dental problem 10%, leukoria (*safed pani*) 10%, Weakness 12% and 1% have Liver disorder, dysentery 10%. Apart from those cases of snake bite, dog bite and Scorpio bite also found.

Among Halba, some common method of diagnosis and treatment of diseases is found. Several common health problems are cured by local people and elderly member of community, when problems couldn't control and cure by local people they consulted with local healer or traditional healer known as *Baiga*. *Baiga* has knowledge of herbal and medicinal plants of forest and expert of supernatural powers who treats diseases with help of herbal, medicinal plants and magico-religious practices. For diagnosis of problem *Baiga* asks symptoms and history of illness to patient in detail meanwhile he holds wrist of right hand of patient closes his eyes and recites spells (*Mantra padana*) and completion of procedure *Baiga* analyses the exact reason of illness. Then he tells the reason of illness to patient and prescribes some herbal medicine which treated with magico-religious activity. He gives advice to patient to follow some taboos and worship of deities such as: ancestral deities, village deities, special deities who is responsible for particular disease and illness. So traditional medicine system among Halba is cumulative in nature which included treatment of both physical and supernatural diseases and illness, but when the patients not get recover soon they seek for modern medicine system due to easy accessibility and affordability.

Findings of study reveal that 70% Halba believed modern medicine system, 20% believed in traditional healing System and 10% believed in both modern and traditional treatment system. Among Halba some of them preferred modern medicine system instead of traditional medicine system. Halba are literate and aware, so they know modern treatment gives them immediate relief and diagnosis of diseases are more accurate than traditional healing mode, they have also enough money to expend for modern system of treatment. Still they have enormous faith in traditional medicine system for treatment of spiritual factors and very well know the fact that traditional medicine system is their cultural heritage so they should pay respect to it and to make efforts for conserve this unique knowledge.

Conclusion

Health seeking behaviour among tribe is closely related to their conceptualization of disease and health. However the great dilemma in health seeking behaviour that a tribal individual after faces is the choice that they have to make between custom bound practices and beliefs which are laden with socio-religious value and modern system. Among Halba Health and Health seeking behaviour influenced with belief and tradition but continuous exposure in modern world resultant to acceptance of modern medicine System, while they keep intact their traditional medicine system.

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