



**ASSESSMENT OF DECISION MAKING SKILLS AMONG THE TRIBALS OF NILGIRIS DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU**

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**ABSTRACT**

Conventionally, anthropologists considered the people, as tribes who were backward in some sense or other, inhabited in remote, inaccessible areas and were not familiar with the art of modern living. They live in isolation. Such concept, however does not quite describe the tribes of India. These groups always had links with other people and shared with them a largely common cultural heritage. The term scheduled tribe in India is generally defined by the political and administration consideration for uplifting a section of the Indian people which have been relatively remotely situated in the hills and forests and which is backward in terms of the statistics of the development. In this paper an attempt has been made to assess the decision making skills of five tribes who live in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu. They are Todas, Kotas, Paniyas, Irulas and Kurumbas. 1000 respondents were chosen and were tested to identify five skills namely inquiry, insight, drive, diagnosis and planning.

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**INTRODUCTION**

India has one of the largest concentrations of Tribal population in the world. According to the census of 1991, the tribal population in India is 67.67 million constituting 8.08 percent of total population. There are about 449 Tribes and Sub-Tribes in different part of India. Most of the Tribes live mostly in well-defined but isolated hilly areas and followed distinctive culture. The term 'Tribe' has been widely used in anthropology, but there is no general consensus as to its precise definition or appropriate application. The Roman word 'TRIBUA' meant a Political Unit, and was to refer to social groups defined by the territory they occupied. Morgan (1877) defined the tribe as a group which possessed social institutions but not political ones. Maine (1861) characterized it as a group in which legal relations were based on the principle of status rather than that of control. In this sense of a pre-political or pre-contact society, the term passed into general usage as a synonym for a primitive social group. In Indian context, anthropologist, Nayak (1988) tried his best to summarize most of the opinions on the definition of a tribe and he stated that "A tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation,

endogamous, with no specification of functions, ruled by the tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, reorganizing social distance with tribes or castes without any as it does in caste structure, following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of a homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration". The birth of the Constitution of India on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950 marks the origin of the term 'Scheduled Tribe'. The concept 'Scheduled Tribe' has now become an objective one. It, as conceived by Indian administrators, continued to differ from that of anthropologists. Today anthropologists and administrators use the same definition and refer to the list of Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of recognizing a tribe. As per the 2001 census Scheduled Tribes population constitute 83 million, which is a little over 8 percent on India's population. However, they are not a homogeneous community, but belong to different racial and linguistic groups and profess diverse faith. Recognizing the special needs of the STs, the constitution of India made certain special safeguards to protect these communities from all the possible exploitation and thus ensure social justice. While Article 14 confers equal rights and opportunities for all, Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of sex, religion, race, caste, etc., Article 15(4) enjoins upon the state to make special provisions for the advancement

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of any socially and educationally background classes: Article 16(4) empowers the state to make provisions for reservation in appointments or posts in favour of any backward classes of citizens, which in the opinion of the state, is not adequately represented in the services under the state. Reddy and N.S. Balaji Rao (2003), have concluded that the exotic tribes of the Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, namely, Toda, Kota, Kurumba and Irula serve classic example for the phenomenon of social matrix with their native technologies of livelihood and later victims of modern technologies. The establishment of co-existence as livelihood strategy when they were completely in isolation for centuries followed by physical changes of the environment that affected their life and livelihood, consequent to opening of these hills by alien cultures is worth reporting. These aspects of social matrix and coexistence of the past are the positive assertions of group identity and solidarity co-operation.

Raj Pathanial, Praveen and Pathnia (2007), this paper was undertaken with the objective to study the participation of male and female tribal respondents in the various activities related to domestic, arts and handicrafts, music and social. The study was carried on 150 male and 150 female selected from Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti and Bharmaur subdivision of Chamba district. Boys had more participation than girls in agricultural operations animal grazing, milking of animal and marketing of produce whereas girls participated more in household chores, animal care, siblings care and fetching of water, as far as arts and handicrafts was concerned, boys had more participation in drawing and painting activities, girls had more participation in arts and handicrafts activities like weaving, embroidery, traditional craft and stitching.

Monali Ramesh Panchbhai (2008) stated that Tribal's have several sub-groups all of them together known as 'Tribal Society'. It is really difficult to say whether they are Indigenous or not but they are earliest settlers of India. They were living in forests since early times and even now some of the groups follow the same trends and live in forests. Tribal's constitute around 8.08% of the total Indian population, and of the total tribal population around 80% found in central India. 'People of India' project shows that there is extent of sharing of culture in most of the tribes and non-tribes now. The percentage of joint families is higher among the tribals and most of them are engaged with agriculture and related activities as their main occupation. There are exceptions and some educated tribal's have opted for nuclear families. Rajkishor Meher (2009) this essay contends that the economic liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) model of development in India is virtually depriving the tribal people and other agriculture dependent poor people of their traditional means of sustainable livelihood by promoting the unregulated growth of mineral-based industries in the tribal regions of India. In the name of modernization and the country's economic development, the elites in India are taking over the life sustaining resources of the poor and pushing them into a further marginalized state of living as a result of displacing them from their land and homes. Such development serves the interests of these elites while it impoverishes the tribal people and poor peasants in these regions who are dependent on the life sustaining resources of the ecosystems in which they live. The mining and other industries that are taking over the resources of the ecosystems of these tribal people and poor peasants fail to provide them with an improved and sustainable

means of making a living. The very nature of the present development paradigm does not provide for the absorption of these poor people into the organized non-farm sector economy by either developing their skills or providing them with technical education.

The course of action consciously chosen from available alternatives for the purpose of achieving desired results is called decision making. All human beings make decisions. A good decision depends on the maker's being consciously aware of the factors that set the stage for the decisions. The environment of the maker determines many factors that must be accepted as being out of control of the maker. Predetermined objectives provide the focus for a current decision. Many decisions seem to be simple at first glance merely because the maker fails to comprehend the number of factors that impinge on the situation. Broad education and experience may tend to complicate the task of decision making by increasing awareness of the number of factors involved. A good decision is dependent upon the recognition of the right problem. With these facts in mind, the paper focuses on the following objectives:

1. To assess the decisions making skills of the tribal
2. To determine the differences among the different tribes with respect to decision making skills.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Area of research:** The Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu is chosen for the present study.

**Sample Population:** Five tribes of the district namely Kotas, Todas, Irulas, Kurumbas and Paniyas are chosen for the study.

**Sample size:** A total of 1000 respondents are taken for the study. 200 respondents ranging from 20 to 40 years of age from each tribal group were selected for the present study.

**Sampling method:** The method of sampling used for this study is Simple random sampling.

**Data collection Method:** Primary Data is collected through a set of questionnaire and interview method is followed to gather the required information. Secondary data is collected through various journals, internet and other related books.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study is confined to test five skills related to decision making. They are insight, inquiry, drive, planning and diagnosis. From Table 1 it can be inferred that the pace of response (9.98) and the sense of inquiry (9.48) is more among the tribal population followed by diagnosis (8.13), insight (7.97), drive (6.27) and planning (6.07). The pace of response is all about flexibility, immediate adaptability, adjusting time priorities, seizing opportunities and making progress. They do have the capability for accuracy, fact finding, defining standards, principals, analyzing and classifying and categorising the facts. They have less preparation for foreseeing, predicting, anticipating, monitoring and over viewing action. The decision making skill drive is about building resolve, applying pressure, resisting pressure,

**Table 1. Decisions making skills among the tribals of Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu**

S.no	Description	Mean	Standard deviation
1	Get down to the details and thoroughly examine data so as to make an accurate analysis of the problem facing me	1.32	.538
2	Be able to offer several likely alternative solutions whenever faced by a complicated problem	1.11	.338
3	Feel more confident if I am able to review the work regularly stage by stage and update plans accordingly	1.17	.376
4	Rarely put off those jobs that I don't enjoy doing, but do whatever needs to be done at that particular time	1.09	.292
5	Really enjoy doing those tasks where there is a real challenge to win	1.23	.470
6	Describe my style, in a demanding situation as a 'resolute', insistent and persistent, when confronted with opposition or obstacles	1.43	.606
7	Spend considerable time clarifying and crystallizing issues or to be clear about where I need to concentrate my effort	1.05	.226
8	Seek out analyze and structure data information in order to understand exactly what problem is up against	1.10	.305
9	Be able to exploit or capitalize upon opportunities for improvement, whenever I spot them	1.20	.425
10	Rely on my determination and personal drive, in order to overcome obstacles, or resistance when making a decision	1.30	.496
11	Clarify priorities so that I have clear sense of both what is important and what is not so	1.25	.458
12	Carefully check to ensure that I actually have obtained all the information that I really need and that is accurate	1.16	.408
13	Convince others of the need to explore new possibilities more than in simply working to proven ways	1.17	.389
14	Make sure that I am to the clear about the principles, yardsticks and rules that govern what I do	1.22	.497
15	Concentrate on the question - what really matters here	1.15	.401
16	Always have the energy at hand necessary to do what is required when it is needed	1.14	.388
17	Time my responses, so that I can usually respond with maximum impact to change in circumstances or opportunities	1.06	.234
18	Keep abreast of emerging trends and their consequences upon the major decisions that I make	1.15	.359
19	Establish just what criteria or parameters are involved, when examining a difficult problem I have to deal with	1.12	.355
20	Feel more comfortable, If I have got things clearly focused and know my priorities are	1.07	.264
21	Put pressure on people when needed in order to make sure things as happened as I want them	1.13	.380
22	Inject high energy and enthusiasm into any project in which I become involved	1.07	.248
23	Work experimentally and typically try out lots of new ideas, before making my decision	1.22	.416
24	Be quite clear about the ground rules, standards or principles, to which I am expected to work	1.16	.392
25	Respond in a planned systematic way, having 'read' the situation well beforehand	1.15	.378
26	Have a clear idea of most important needs in situations	1.21	.446
27	Recognize clearly the core issues of whatever problem I am involved in	1.18	.429
28	Change time priorities or goals, in order to take full advantage of opportunities as they rise	1.19	.424
29	Be very alert to shifts in events, or tactics, so as to respond more opportunely as and when needed	1.20	.446
30	Usually produce good ideas, quite quickly, for getting out of a real 'hole'	1.12	.378
31	Disregard things which seem to be unnecessary or unrealistic	1.23	.463
32	Protect my plans by continuously reading the situation and being alert to changing conditions	1.44	.563
33	Enjoy the excitement and level of challenge or risk involved in sudden changes to the course of action	1.13	.363
34	Want to be seen as a person whose work is through, accurate and reliable	1.22	.433
35	Want to be seen as a person whose approach is characterized by determination and courage	1.18	.431
36	Be annoyed about working closely with someone who gets into difficulties because they did not plan ahead	1.17	.446
37	Being irritated by people who are stubborn and unnecessarily unyielding, when reality suggests compromise	1.09	.375
38	Be frustrated by people who constantly allow others to the initiative from them through lack of assertiveness	1.07	.295
39	Be the one others take to ensure that the future will be properly taken care of	1.09	.359
40	Be the person others turn to for fresh ideas and new insights	1.08	.297
41	Be the one others look for action, when and where it is Needed	1.11	.337
42	See myself as confident, capable and clear thinking with a good sense of reality.	1.11	.337

**Table 2. Two Way Anova**

	Sum of squares	D.f	Mean sum of squares	F	Sig
Between groups	51.498	5	10.300	.995	.420
Within groups	10292.402	994	10.355		
Total	10343.900	999			

**Table 3. Post HOC Duncan method**

Community of the respondents	N	Subset for alpha=.05
Thodas	227	47.6608
Kurumbas	81	47.6790
Kotas	198	47.8889
Paniyas	236	47.9576
Irulas	256	48.1953

**Table 4. Demographic profiles and their relationship to select areas of decision making****Test of hypothesis**

Null hypothesis	Chi square value	Degree of freedom	Result
There is no significant difference between the age of the Respondent and tendency to offer several likely alternative solutions whenever faced by a complicated problem	14.05	8	Accepted
No relationship between the age of the Respondent and the importance given to review the work regularly stage by stage and update the plans accordingly	1.67	4	Accepted
All age group enjoy doing those tasks where there is a real challenge to win	7.093	8	Accepted
No significant relationship between age and the tendency to seek out analyze and structure data information in order to understand exactly what problem is up against	4.891	8	Accepted
All age group always have the energy at hand necessary to do what is required when it is needed	8.002	8	Rejected
Changing time priorities or goals, in order to take full advantage of opportunities as they rise is the same irrespective of the age group.	10.204	8	Accepted
Male do not maintain some distance, in relationships, in order to remain effective as a boss than the female	1.802	2	Accepted
Male do not have the tendency to Set the examples as a competent, confident leader than the female.	7.499	2	Rejected
No significant relationship between the gender and the response time realised for responding to change in circumstances or opportunities	3.289	2	Accepted
There is no relationship between the gender of the Respondent and Inject high energy and enthusiasm into any project in which I become involved	4.281	2	Accepted
No significant relationship between the gender and responding in a planned systematic way, having 'read' the situation well beforehand.	3.716	2	Accepted

persisting, persevering, maintain purpose like what do we need, who or what is going to cause the problem. From the above interpretation it can be concluded that the awareness i.e. situation analysis (17.95) is more among the respondents followed by action i.e., execution and commitment (16.05) and the least is direction i.e. mission and task analysis (14.40). The five tribes chosen were from different background. The todas own cows and buffaloes and do business in the form of selling milk in the local areas. The kotas are farmers and have their own agriculture lands. The kurumbas, irulas and paniyas are labours. They work in agriculture lands or do some daily wages work. In order to test the significance difference of decision making skills among the tribal's null hypothesis is framed and the same is tested through Duncan method.

Ho: There is no significant difference in the decision making skills among the respondents of different tribes. From Table 2 and 3 it is clear that there is no significant difference in the decision making skills among the respondents of different tribes. Due to their ignorance and low literacy rate, they are not able to develop themselves. From the above Table 4, it is clear that irrespective of all age group, the decision making skills with respect to seizing opportunities, setting the work according to a well planned manner and taking up challenging tasks is the same. However the energy to take up different tasks differs from one age group to other. Both male and female respondents have the same level of decision making skills.

### Conclusion

Even after six decades of planned economic development, still the condition of the tribal's remain pathetic due to lack of proper infrastructure facilities including transportation, education, health care etc. The empowerment from the point of view of social, economic and social justice is needed for which the government and voluntary organisations have to initiate necessary measures. Then only we can see the overall development of the tribals in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu.

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