



## Research Article

# INTERGENERATIONAL AGRICULTURAL SKILL TRANSFER AMONG KHARWAR-AGRARIAN TRIBALS

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**Abstract:** India has been agricultural country but the trend has been decreasing from 85% to present about 70% population depends on agriculture. India has a diversified topology that allows the farmers to grow a variety of traditional and contemporary crops and plantations. Farming in India has been a traditional occupation from times unknown where the older generation provides opportunities, trains and educates the younger generation and children the art and science of farming. Somehow this tradition is breaking in most of the rural areas. An ex-post facto study conducted with the Kharwar tribe of Kaimur district, Bihar to understand the ways of tribe's relationship with their ecology. It was observed that Kharwar families involved children in certain agricultural operations with the intention of keep children familiar of the operations of farming like winnowing, transferring paddy seedling to the fields for transplantation while older children learnt to plough their lands as being the third plougher in the row after the adult farmers. Children were encouraged to imitate and participate in agriculture and non-agricultural activities which manifested in their play. Parents took their children as early as seven years, to transfer traditional indigenous knowledge while their visit to the forest mainly to collect appropriate food and leaves and fruits that can fetch them cash. It is concluded that while learning family occupation skills is important for preservation of indigenous knowledge through intergenerational skill and knowledge transfer to children of the family, their rights should be protected. For attracting younger generation to the noble profession of agriculture, involvement of children through early intervention from young age through walks to agriculture fields, observing the various operations, supporting appropriate activities around agriculture by their caretakers and teachers is recommended as long-term goal. Educating parents of the importance of occupational socialization and agriculture and practical as part of school curriculum with farmer's interface.

**Keywords:** Tribes of India, Children of farm women, Indigenous knowledge, Socialization, Skills transfer in agriculture

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## Introduction

Agriculture has been a noble family-based profession involving children to learn the basic operations from their parents and other adults in the family and community. Intergenerational relationships, referred to as ties between individuals or group of different ages. Intergenerational relationships are the social and family relationships between members of different generations, are important for continuity of knowledge and skill that are well established through ages [1]. Every society is faced with the necessity of making a responsible member and learn the expectations of the society. It is the process through which younger generation learns the roles of adult which he is expected to play. Aspects of the job or occupation are important determinant in the process of socialization. The learning of attitude and behaviours necessary to recognize and sustain competence within a context employment is called as occupational socialization, these include skills acquired through training, informal work norms, peer-group values and relationships.

Aspiras et al. (2020) [2] noted that occupation or job varies from person to person's field of specialization, and will differ in wages, time consumption. Baferani (2015) [3] in the research on family affect on socialization of the high school children's children revealed that control of family affects children's socialization. The cold and warm relations in family affects the socialization of children [4]. In most cultures around the world parents are the primary care takers and therefore, it becomes their responsibility for intergenerational transfer of knowledge, skill and socialize the younger generation in their respective family

occupation as much of the skill and knowledge are not available in books and are handed over from one generation to another by practice and words. Aemmi and Moonaghi (2017) too also believe that one of the goals of education is transfer of knowledge, skills, competencies, wisdom, norms, and values between generations [5]. Agriculture as occupation seems to be losing their family bond, which is a cause of concern today. This article brings forth the intergenerational skill transfer and socialization of Kharwar tribe children into their agriculture ways. Insights into their world of occupational socialization may make us rethink on the issues of sustaining agriculture in India and conserving ITK and practices.

## Materials and Methods

### Methods 1

The Kharwar tribes of Bihar residing in the Adharua block of Kaimur district were purposely selected as the tribe was traditionally engaged in agriculture. They practiced settled agriculture and they had other minor source of income from collection of forest produce. Since, tribal have their own philosophy of livelihood and way of socializing their children, it was interesting to note the intergenerational agriculture-based attitude and skill transfer among the Kharwars. The tribe located at the plateau region of Bihar were mostly spread through the adharua block of Kaimur district which was selected for the study. Descriptive ex-post facto design of study was used and conducted survey with 300 Kharwar tribe parents, selected using two-stage random sampling technique for selecting the villages and families from the Kaimur block of Bihar.

## Methods 2

To understand their intergenerational agriculture skill transfer, observations were recorded on personal visits to the families for face to face interview with families were engaged in farming and had at least one child between the age of seven to fourteen years. One child from each family were included in the study. The parents were interviewed for their child's involvement in agriculture and the responses recorded and consolidated and multiple responses to the reason given by the parents has been presented and discussed [6].

## Results

The study found that majority of Kharwar tribes in the study were small farmers having less than 2.5 acres or one hectare land (68.3%), marginal farmers with land cultivation of 2.5 to 5.0 acres or one to 2 hectares (23.3%) and a few had more than two hectares land (5.7%). The majority of parents were illiterate (70% father and 96% mother), primary educated (13.3% fathers and 4% mothers). Children of the tribe either took education at residential school or govt. or school being run by NGO in the area. Tribal children staying with parents were usually socialized in tribal agriculture ecology at an early age. Children from the residential schools were involved only during peak agricultural season, as the children in the residential school had limited holidays/leave granted from school. The adults in the family claimed that involving children in agriculture was mainly to gradually wean them into their agriculture ways and knowledge of tribal living. Children were taken with them to the fields so that they observe the operations being done by the farmers at the fields. Kharwar children manifested this in their playing 'agriculture' [Fig-1].



Fig-1 Tribal child playing 'agriculture'

Children imitated the action of their parents in agriculture operations and created scene of the agriculture set up in their play [Fig-2]



Fig-2 Tribal child imitating agriculture operation in play  
Older siblings played a crucial role in orienting the younger ones in tribal way of

agriculture during their play, especially when parents were engaged in arranging and preparing for necessary inputs for farming along with their household duties children imitated [Fig-3].



Fig-3 Older sibling guiding and orienting 'agriculture' in their play

## Transferring ploughing skill to children

Ploughing is the agriculture operation done by men only with the pair of oxen. Kharwar tribe had a unique way of teaching and grooming their boys for ploughing operations, which was initiated as young as eight years old, by training them to handle the animals, harness and preparing them for field operations like ploughing [Fig-4]. Being with cattle is not an alien activity for tribal children as they are used to accompany the herd of cattle for grazing in the forest that included members of different generation.



Fig-4 Tribal child learning to harness ox to plough



Fig-5 Tribal child learning to plough with adults of their community



While ploughing the field, Khawar tribe have a tradition of working in trio, that is, the three plougher enter into the field to be ploughed with most stronger one leading and the other two follow him one after another. For training their children the skill to plough, the Kharwar parents trained and groomed to plough by letting him be the third plougher, because by that time the land is soft enough for the child to manage the ploughing. The adults especially parents gave them necessary instructions to the child when he had any difficulty in the operation [Fig-5]. On an average, a child after 10 years and a few children were introduced to farming operations at the age of 12-13 years.

#### Transfer of knowledge and skill with respect to forest produce

The parents of the tribal children also transferred their knowledge about forest life and produce from an early age of seven years old. The association of the tribals with forest makes them different for rural and urban living. The intergenerational transfer of knowledge and skill related to forest and livelihood, was done by children accompanying their parents for nature walk in forest especially when the food like ripened mahua flowers, piyar fruits and cash produce like tendu leaves used for bidi making and other handicraft were available for harvesting / collection. While the parents and –children move through the forest, the parents share their knowledge of other flora and fauna in their ecology and also about their function. The kharwars are known to collect many other produces from forest which are typically relished by tribes like putako (ball mushroom), hail-hail (a type of wild colocasia), parera, lasora, pathari leaves, konar leaves, wild kundru and kena leaves, kekka, kukudi (a type of mushroom), Chakwar leaves, Banyan figs, Moli, flower and like [Fig-6].



Fig-6 Tribal child with mushroom collected by her from forest with her parents

#### Fishing skill

Fishing was another skill introduced to children while children accompanied their parent especially mother where they were taught to fish the tribal way [Fig-7].



Fig-7 Tribal child learning to fish the tribal way with her parents and other adults of the community

#### Discussion

Agriculture is a noble occupation practiced by both rural and tribal families. Each have their own practices which must be transferred to the next and other younger generation. Agriculture today has taken up formal education from higher education onwards, but the fact is the real attitude and physical and emotional connect to the lands begins to take shape from an early age. Tribal families take responsibility to hand over their learning to the next generation. This valued knowledge is rarely found in formal books, but are passed from one generation to another by narration, learning by doing and play. While the tribal parents socialize the children into agriculture occupation, it is yet to record the intergenerational transfer of agriculture skills and knowledge among the rural families. Today the scientists and policy makers are concerned with the low attraction of the youth towards agriculture as profession. India is known for its agriculture indigenous knowledge in agriculture. The gap in the intergenerational transfer of skills and knowledge in agriculture is much needed action in today's context and for the future of the country and human race. Sudarshan (2021) also noted that agriculture also stood as a support pillar for labours and enabled food –sufficiency in grain production but inspite the significant role of agriculture and allied subjects form a negligible part of school syllabus in most states.

#### Conclusion

It is concluded that in the interest of agriculture, food and nutritional security of the human race it is important to have long term goals and short-term goals too to sustain agriculture. As long-term goal, the positive attitude and action towards agriculture among our young generation is must responsibility of parents and agrarian community. The educational institutes like schools and other organizations should plan their activities to make children familiar of the farming community and help them appreciate their noble work that feed the nation and other countries of the world. Agri tourism should be planned for the present generation also with participatory approach to empathize what farm families do to save the world from hunger and ill health.

**Application of research:** The research is an eye opener and highlights the role of parents as well as siblings in transferring the skills and knowledge through play and participatory learning. Further researches are needed to understand the present scenario of intergenerational transfer of agriculture knowledge and skill in both rural and tribal community. Both long term and short term efforts are needed to make the population sensitize of farmers efforts and attract them to the profession of agriculture.

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**Research Category:** Intergenerational Skill Transfer

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**Cultivar / Variety / Breed name:** Nil

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