

The Role of Indigenous Cultural Values in Shaping Educational Experiences in Rural Assam: A Philosophical Perspective with Reference to Nagaon District, Assam

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the role of indigenous cultural values in shaping the educational experiences of students in rural Assam from a philosophical perspective, with special reference to Nagaon district. The study aims (1) to compare indigenous cultural values among students with respect to gender, class, and indigenous community, and (2) to examine the relationship between indigenous cultural values and the educational experiences of students in rural Assam. Indigenous communities of Assam possess rich cultural traditions, indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and learning practices that emphasize community participation, experiential learning, moral values, and ecological awareness.

The study employed a qualitative and philosophical approach supported by empirical analysis. Statistical techniques such as t-test, ANOVA, Tukey HSD, and Pearson correlation were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that students possessed a considerable level of indigenous cultural values ($M = 27.96$, $SD = 4.34$). No significant differences were found based on gender ($t = -0.166$, $p = 0.868$) and class level ($F = 0.187$, $p = 0.905$). However, significant differences were observed among indigenous communities ($F = 55.534$, $p < .001$). The relationship between indigenous cultural values and educational experiences was found to be weak and statistically insignificant ($r = 0.056$, $p = 0.623$). The study highlights the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and cultural practices into formal education to promote culturally responsive and inclusive learning environments in rural Assam.

Keywords: Indigenous Cultural Values, Educational Experiences, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Rural Assam, Philosophy of Education

INTRODUCTION:

Assam is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse states in Northeast India, inhabited by several indigenous communities, including the Bodo, Mising, Karbi, Rabha, Tiwa, Deori, Dimasa, Sonowal Kachari, and Thengal Kachari. These communities possess distinct languages, customs, belief systems, and traditional knowledge that have evolved through centuries of interaction with their natural and socio-cultural environments. Their educational practices have historically been community-oriented, emphasizing oral traditions, storytelling, observation, participation in agricultural activities, festivals, crafts, music, and ecological knowledge. Learning within these communities extends beyond formal schooling and is deeply embedded in everyday life, contributing to the preservation of cultural identity and social cohesion (Barpujari, 1990; Doley, 2020).

In rural Assam, education has traditionally functioned as both a cultural and philosophical process. Before the introduction of colonial education, indigenous institutions and community-

based learning systems played a central role in transmitting knowledge, moral values, and practical skills. Traditional institutions such as *Satras*, *Namghars*, village councils, and family networks served as important spaces for education, where values of cooperation, respect for elders, environmental stewardship, and collective responsibility were nurtured. Historical accounts indicate that oral instruction and locally rooted educational practices formed the foundation of learning in Assam before the expansion of modern schooling.

The indigenous knowledge systems of Assam encompass traditional ecological knowledge, sustainable agricultural practices, herbal medicine, weaving, folk literature, music, and customary laws. These knowledge systems represent valuable intellectual and cultural resources that contribute not only to community well-being but also to sustainable development and environmental conservation. However, the expansion of standardized curricula and examination-oriented education has often marginalized indigenous epistemologies, resulting in a widening gap between formal education and the lived realities of indigenous learners. Recent educational policy discussions in Assam have highlighted challenges such as linguistic marginalization, the absence of culturally relevant curricula, and limited incorporation of indigenous perspectives into classroom teaching.

Recognizing the educational significance of indigenous cultural values is therefore essential for developing culturally responsive and inclusive educational practices in rural Assam. A philosophical examination of these values offers deeper insights into how indigenous worldviews shape learners' identities, moral development, and relationships with society and nature. Such an approach not only strengthens the preservation of Assam's rich cultural heritage but also contributes to reimagining education as a process rooted in local knowledge, community participation, and holistic human development (Barpujari, 1990; Goswami, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

The indigenous communities of rural Assam, including the Bodo, Mising, Karbi, Rabha, Tiwa, Deori, and Dimasas, have long preserved unique cultural values and knowledge systems through oral traditions, community participation, indigenous languages, and experiential learning. However, the growing dominance of formal education has led to a gradual decline in the incorporation of these indigenous cultural values within school curricula and teaching practices. Standardized educational frameworks often prioritize uniform content and assessment methods, leaving little room for local histories, traditions, and indigenous ways of knowing (Barpujari, 1990; Government of India, 2020).

This situation has created a disconnect between formal education and the lived experiences of indigenous learners. While schools emphasize prescribed curricula, indigenous communities continue to value learning that is rooted in culture, nature, and collective responsibility. Consequently, students may experience a weakening of cultural identity and reduced appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems (Doley, 2020).

Although studies on tribal education in Assam have examined issues such as literacy, access, and educational development, limited attention has been given to the philosophical foundations of indigenous education. There is a need to explore how indigenous cultural values influence educational experiences and how these values can contribute to a more holistic and culturally responsive educational system. A philosophical understanding of indigenous education is therefore essential for bridging the gap between formal schooling and local knowledge systems while promoting educational practices that respect the cultural diversity of rural Assam.

Research Objectives

1. To compare indigenous cultural values among students with respect to gender, class, and indigenous community.

2. To examine the relationship between indigenous cultural values and educational experiences of students in rural Assam.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of indigenous cultural values among students in rural Assam?
2. Is there a significant relationship between indigenous cultural values and students' educational experiences in rural Assam?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it examines the role of indigenous cultural values in shaping the educational experiences of students in rural Assam from a philosophical perspective. It contributes to the philosophy of education by highlighting indigenous education as a holistic process rooted in experiential learning, community participation, moral values, and harmonious relationships with nature. Indigenous knowledge systems challenge conventional views of education by recognizing multiple ways of knowing and learning that are deeply embedded in local culture and everyday life (Dewey, 1916; Barpujari, 1990).

The study is also important for educational policy and practice. The findings may assist policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators in designing culturally responsive educational programmes that reflect the diverse cultural contexts of Assam. This aligns with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which advocates the inclusion of local languages, indigenous knowledge, and experiential learning in school education (Government of India, 2020). The study may also provide evidence for strengthening the implementation of culturally inclusive educational practices in rural schools.

Furthermore, the research contributes to the preservation of indigenous knowledge by documenting the educational significance of traditional practices, oral traditions, ecological knowledge, folk arts, and indigenous languages. Recognizing these knowledge systems within formal education can help safeguard Assam's rich cultural heritage while promoting intergenerational transmission of indigenous values (Doley, 2020; Goswami, 2014).

Finally, the study promotes culturally inclusive education by emphasizing the need to integrate indigenous cultural values into the teaching–learning process. Such integration can enhance students' cultural identity, improve learning engagement, and foster mutual respect for cultural diversity. The findings are expected to benefit researchers, teachers, educational administrators, and indigenous communities by providing a philosophical and empirical basis for developing an education system that is inclusive, context-sensitive, and responsive to the educational needs of rural Assam (Barpujari, 1990; Government of India, 2020).

Review of Literature

International Studies

Battiste (2002) examined the role of indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education and argued that indigenous knowledge systems are holistic, community-oriented, and rooted in cultural traditions. The study emphasized that mainstream education often marginalizes indigenous ways of knowing, leading to the erosion of cultural identity. Battiste recommended integrating indigenous knowledge into formal education to promote educational equity, cultural preservation, and meaningful learning experiences for indigenous learners (Battiste, 2002).

UNESCO (2021) highlighted the importance of indigenous knowledge in achieving inclusive and sustainable education. The report emphasized that indigenous languages, cultural traditions, and local knowledge contribute significantly to quality education and sustainable development. UNESCO recommended that educational systems recognize indigenous epistemologies, encourage multilingual education, and develop culturally relevant curricula that respect indigenous identities and heritage (UNESCO, 2021).

Smith (2012), in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, examined the relationship between indigenous knowledge and educational research. The study argued that indigenous perspectives have historically been marginalized within conventional educational systems and research. Smith emphasized the need for culturally sensitive educational practices and research methodologies that respect indigenous worldviews, knowledge systems, and community participation in education (Smith, 2012).

National Studies

Government of India (2020), through the *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020*, emphasized the integration of Indian knowledge systems, local languages, and experiential learning into school education. The policy recognized the importance of preserving indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity while promoting holistic and inclusive education. It recommended incorporating local traditions and cultural heritage into curricula to make education more relevant and learner-centred (Government of India, 2020).

Xaxa (2005) examined the educational status of tribal communities in India and observed that formal education has often overlooked indigenous languages, cultural traditions, and community-based knowledge systems. The study argued that education should acknowledge tribal identities and indigenous knowledge to ensure equitable educational opportunities and cultural preservation. It further emphasized the need for culturally responsive educational policies for tribal communities (Xaxa, 2005).

Nambissan (2006) investigated educational inequalities among marginalized and tribal communities in India. The study found that socio-economic disadvantages, language barriers, and culturally irrelevant curricula continue to affect the educational participation and achievement of tribal students. The author suggested that inclusive educational policies should recognize local cultures and indigenous knowledge to improve educational access and learning outcomes (Nambissan, 2006).

Mohanty (2019) examined multilingual education and indigenous language preservation in India. The study reported that mother tongue-based education improves students' learning outcomes, classroom participation, and cultural identity. It recommended strengthening multilingual education policies to preserve indigenous languages and enhance educational equity among tribal communities (Mohanty, 2019).

Regional Studies (Assam)

Barpujari (1990) documented the historical development of Assam and highlighted the educational traditions of indigenous communities such as the Bodo, Mising, Karbi, Rabha, Tiwa, and Dimasa. The study observed that education in these communities was traditionally transmitted through oral traditions, family participation, customary practices, and community institutions. It emphasized that indigenous knowledge played a significant role in preserving cultural identity and social values in rural Assam (Barpujari, 1990).

Doley (2020) examined the educational status of the Mishing community in Assam and identified several challenges affecting indigenous education, including language barriers, curriculum mismatch, inadequate educational resources, and declining use of indigenous knowledge in schools. The study recommended integrating indigenous culture and language into school curricula to make education more meaningful and culturally relevant for tribal students (Doley, 2020).

Goswami (2014) analysed the historical development of education in Assam and discussed the influence of colonial education on indigenous communities. The study reported that the expansion of formal education gradually reduced the role of traditional educational institutions

and indigenous knowledge systems. It emphasized the importance of preserving Assam's indigenous cultural heritage by incorporating local history, traditions, and cultural values into contemporary education (Goswami, 2014).

Research Gap

The review of existing literature reveals that international studies have emphasized the significance of indigenous knowledge systems, culturally responsive pedagogy, and the preservation of indigenous identities in education (Battiste, 2002; Smith, 2012; UNESCO, 2021). National studies have primarily focused on tribal education, educational inequality, multilingual education, and policy initiatives such as the National Education Policy (2020), highlighting the need to integrate indigenous knowledge into formal education (Xaxa, 2005; Government of India, 2020).

Regional studies in Assam have largely examined the historical development of education, the educational status of specific indigenous communities, and challenges related to language and curriculum (Barpujari, 1990; Doley, 2020; Goswami, 2014). However, limited research has explored how indigenous cultural values shape the educational experiences of students in rural Assam from a philosophical perspective. Moreover, few empirical studies have quantitatively examined the relationship between indigenous cultural values and students' educational experiences. Therefore, the present study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating the role of indigenous cultural values in shaping educational experiences in rural Assam through both philosophical inquiry and empirical analysis.

Theoretical and Philosophical Framework

The present study is grounded in the philosophy of education and indigenous philosophical traditions to examine how indigenous cultural values shape the educational experiences of students in rural Assam. Education is understood not merely as the acquisition of academic knowledge but as a lifelong process of cultural transmission, moral development, identity formation, and social participation. Indigenous communities of Assam, including the Bodo, Mising, Karbi, Rabha, Tiwa, Deori, and Dimasa, have historically developed their own systems of education through community participation, oral traditions, experiential learning, and close interaction with the natural environment. These indigenous educational practices can be understood through the philosophical perspectives of Idealism, Naturalism, Pragmatism, and Humanism, while the concepts of indigenous epistemology, axiology, and ontology provide a framework for understanding the nature of indigenous knowledge, values, and worldview.

Philosophy of Education

Idealism

Idealism regards education as a means of developing the intellectual, moral, and spiritual qualities of individuals. It emphasizes the pursuit of truth, goodness, and ethical values, considering education essential for character formation and personal growth (Brubacher, 1962). Indigenous communities in rural Assam have traditionally transmitted moral values such as honesty, respect for elders, social responsibility, cooperation, and cultural identity through storytelling, folklore, songs, rituals, and community participation. Rather than relying solely on textbooks, these communities teach children to become responsible members of society by preserving cultural traditions and ethical principles. Thus, indigenous educational practices reflect the idealist belief that education should cultivate both the mind and character.

Naturalism

Naturalism emphasizes learning through direct interaction with nature and real-life experiences. Rousseau argued that education should follow the natural development of the child and encourage learning through observation and experience rather than rigid instruction (Rousseau, 1762/1979). Indigenous communities in Assam have long adopted this approach by engaging

children in agriculture, fishing, weaving, forest-based livelihoods, and traditional occupations. These experiences help children acquire practical knowledge while developing respect for nature and ecological balance. Learning takes place in natural surroundings where children observe seasonal changes, understand biodiversity, and participate in sustainable practices. Such educational experiences demonstrate that nature itself serves as an important source of knowledge.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism views education as a process of learning by doing and solving real-life problems. Dewey (1916) argued that knowledge becomes meaningful when learners actively engage with their environment and apply their experiences to practical situations. Indigenous education in rural Assam reflects this philosophy by encouraging children to learn through participation in community life. Skills such as farming, weaving, bamboo craftsmanship, food preservation, and traditional ecological practices are acquired through observation and active involvement rather than formal classroom instruction. This experiential approach enables learners to connect knowledge with everyday life and contributes to their social and economic well-being.

Indigenous Epistemology

Indigenous epistemology refers to how indigenous communities generate, preserve, and transmit knowledge. Unlike formal education, which primarily depends on written materials, indigenous knowledge is acquired through lived experiences, observation, participation, and interaction with community members. Knowledge is closely connected to everyday life and practical problem-solving.

Experiential learning is central to indigenous education. Children develop knowledge by participating in agricultural activities, traditional crafts, hunting, fishing, weaving, and household responsibilities. Oral transmission is another important characteristic of indigenous epistemology. Folktales, myths, legends, songs, proverbs, and rituals serve as educational tools through which history, culture, ethics, and social values are communicated across generations. Community-based learning further strengthens knowledge transmission, as elders, parents, artisans, and local leaders actively participate in educating children. Indigenous epistemology also includes ecological wisdom, which reflects a deep understanding of forests, rivers, biodiversity, medicinal plants, and sustainable resource management developed through generations of interaction with the environment (Battiste, 2002).

Indigenous Axiology

Indigenous axiology refers to the system of values that guides educational practices and social life within indigenous communities. These values shape attitudes, behaviours, and relationships and influence the educational experiences of learners.

Respect is a fundamental value reflected in relationships with elders, teachers, family members, and nature. Reciprocity encourages cooperation, mutual support, and the sharing of knowledge and resources for the benefit of the entire community. Collective identity is strengthened through the preservation of indigenous languages, festivals, customs, folklore, music, and traditional practices, allowing education to reinforce cultural continuity. Sustainability is another essential value, encouraging responsible use of natural resources and environmental conservation so that future generations can benefit from the same ecological resources. These values contribute to the holistic development of learners and strengthen their sense of belonging within their communities.

Indigenous Cultural Values Influencing Educational Experiences

Indigenous communities in rural Assam possess rich cultural traditions that significantly influence the educational experiences of children and young learners. Education in these

communities extends beyond formal schooling and is deeply rooted in everyday life, community participation, and cultural practices. Indigenous cultural values provide learners with knowledge, skills, moral principles, and a strong sense of identity while strengthening their relationship with society and nature (Barpujari, 1990; Battiste, 2002).

1. **Community-based learning** is one of the most important features of indigenous education. Learning takes place within the family and the wider community, where parents, elders, artisans, and community leaders actively participate in educating children. Through daily interactions and participation in community activities, learners acquire practical skills, social responsibilities, and cultural values. This collaborative approach strengthens social cohesion and ensures the continuity of indigenous traditions (Dewey, 1916; Barpujari, 1990).
2. **Oral storytelling** serves as a traditional method of transmitting knowledge across generations. Folktales, legends, myths, songs, and proverbs communicate moral values, historical events, cultural beliefs, and life lessons. Storytelling enhances children's listening, communication, and critical thinking skills while preserving indigenous history and collective memory (Battiste, 2002; Smith, 2012).
3. **Indigenous languages** play a crucial role in educational experiences by enabling children to learn within their own cultural and linguistic contexts. Mother tongue learning improves comprehension, strengthens cultural identity, and facilitates effective communication between learners, families, and communities. The preservation of indigenous languages also safeguards traditional knowledge and cultural heritage (Mohanty, 2019; Government of India, 2020).
4. **Respect for elders** is a fundamental cultural value among indigenous communities in Assam. Elders are regarded as custodians of traditional knowledge, customs, and wisdom. Their guidance helps learners develop moral values, discipline, responsibility, and respect for cultural traditions. Learning through interaction with elders encourages intergenerational knowledge transmission and reinforces community values (Barpujari, 1990; Doley, 2020).

Philosophical Analysis

Indigenous education in rural Assam reflects a holistic philosophy of learning that integrates knowledge, cultural values, community life, and environmental responsibility. Unlike formal education, which often emphasizes classroom instruction, indigenous education is rooted in everyday experiences, oral traditions, and participation in community activities. The educational practices of indigenous communities such as the Bodo, Mising, Karbi, Rabha, Tiwa, Deori, and Dimas closely correspond with the educational philosophies of John Dewey, Rabindranath Tagore, and Paulo Freire.

John Dewey's philosophy of experiential learning emphasizes that education should arise from real-life experiences and active participation (Dewey, 1916). Similarly, indigenous children in rural Assam acquire knowledge through farming, weaving, fishing, storytelling, festivals, and community work, making learning practical and meaningful.

Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of holistic education advocates the balanced development of intellectual, emotional, moral, aesthetic, and spiritual qualities through close interaction with nature (Tagore, 1917). Indigenous educational practices reflect this philosophy by promoting creativity, cultural identity, cooperation, and learning in natural and community settings.

Paulo Freire's concept of critical consciousness views education as a process that enables learners to understand their cultural identity and social realities through dialogue and reflection (Freire, 1970). Indigenous education values oral traditions, collective learning, and community participation, empowering learners to preserve their cultural heritage while strengthening their social awareness.

Indigenous moral philosophy is based on ethics of care, community responsibility, and reciprocity, where children learn respect for elders, cooperation, mutual support, and collective responsibility. Furthermore, ecological philosophy emphasizes environmental stewardship and sustainable living by teaching responsible use of forests, rivers, and natural resources. Together, these philosophical

perspectives demonstrate that indigenous education in rural Assam promotes holistic human development, cultural continuity, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability (Battiste, 2002; UNESCO, 2021).

Methodology

The methodology of the present study is designed to explore the role of indigenous cultural values in shaping the educational experiences of students in rural Assam from a philosophical perspective. Since the study seeks to understand the meanings, values, beliefs, and lived experiences associated with indigenous education, a qualitative research methodology is considered the most appropriate. The research emphasizes the interpretation of social realities, indigenous worldviews, and cultural practices rather than the measurement of variables through numerical data.

Research Design

The present study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the role of indigenous cultural values in shaping the educational experiences of students in rural Assam. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it facilitates an in-depth understanding of participants' beliefs, experiences, and cultural practices within their natural settings.

Sources of Data

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected from students, teachers, parents, and community elders of indigenous communities in rural Assam through interviews and interactions to understand cultural values and educational experiences. Secondary data were obtained from books, research articles, journals, government reports, policy documents, dissertations, and other authentic sources related to indigenous education, philosophy of education, and tribal communities. These sources provided theoretical support and contextual understanding for the study.

Sampling

The study employs purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique widely used in qualitative research. Participants are selected based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in indigenous education and cultural practices. A total of 80 participants were selected from rural districts of Assam inhabited by indigenous communities such as the Bodo, Mising, Karbi, Rabha, Tiwa, Deori, and Dimasa.

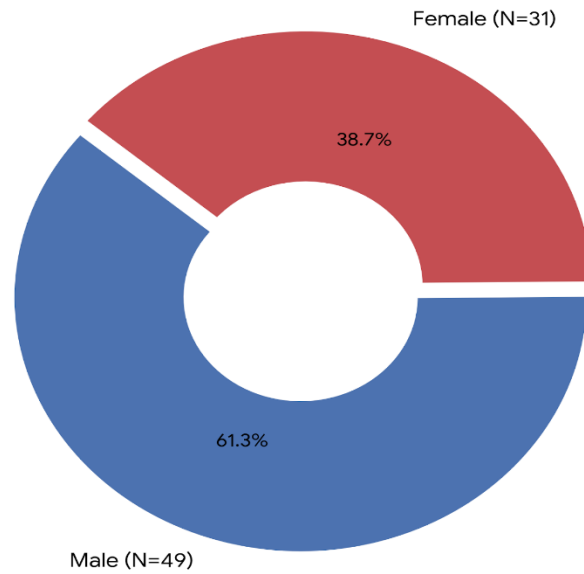
Analysis and Interpretation

Objective 1: To compare indigenous cultural values among students with respect to gender, class, and indigenous community.

Gender Respondents					
Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ICV Total	Male	49	27.8980	4.21923	.60275
	Female	31	28.0645	4.59663	.82558

Graphical Representation

Gender Sample Distribution (N = 80 Total)



Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
ICV_Total	Equal variances assumed	1.084	.301	-.166	78	.868	-.16656	1.00247	-2.16233	1.82921
	Equal variances not assumed			-.163	59.873	.871	-.16656	1.02220	-2.21134	1.87823

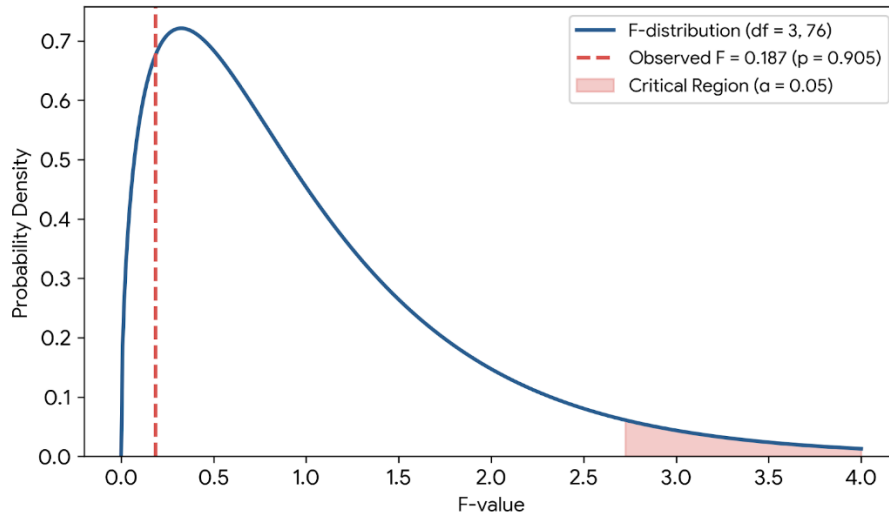
Class Respondents

ANOVA					
ICV Total					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.930	3	3.643	.187	.905
Within Groups	1477.957	76	19.447		

Total	1488.888	79			
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Graphical Representation

ANOVA Hypothesis Test: F-Distribution Curve

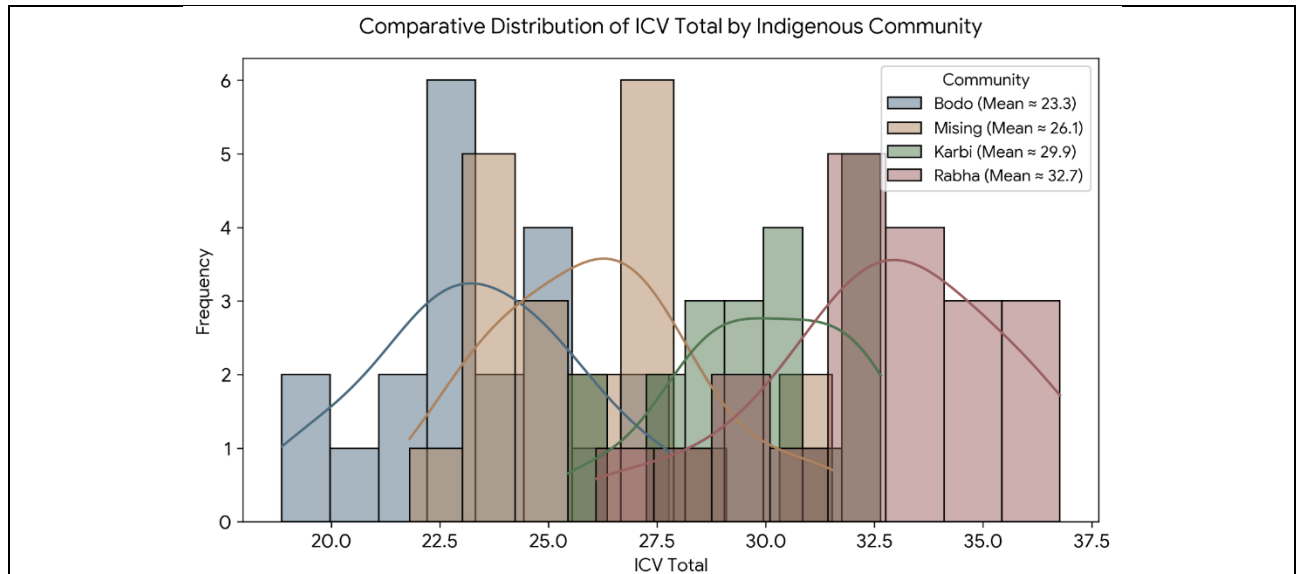


Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: ICV Total						
Tukey HSD						
(I) Class	(J) Class	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Class 9th	Class 10th	.35500	1.26022	.992	-2.9553	3.6653
	Class 11th	-.41071	1.48302	.993	-4.3063	3.4849
	Class 12th	-.59559	1.39793	.974	-4.2677	3.0765
Class 10th	Class 9th	-.35500	1.26022	.992	-3.6653	2.9553
	Class 11th	-.76571	1.47205	.954	-4.6325	3.1011
	Class 12th	-.95059	1.38629	.902	-4.5921	2.6909
Class 11th	Class 9th	.41071	1.48302	.993	-3.4849	4.3063
	Class 10th	.76571	1.47205	.954	-3.1011	4.6325
	Class 12th	-.18487	1.59154	.999	-4.3655	3.9958
Class 12th	Class 9th	.59559	1.39793	.974	-3.0765	4.2677
	Class 10th	.95059	1.38629	.902	-2.6909	4.5921
	Class 11th	.18487	1.59154	.999	-3.9958	4.3655

Indigenous Community (Bodo, Mising, Karbi, etc.)

ANOVA

ICV_Total					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1022.466	3	340.822	55.534	.000
Within Groups	466.422	76	6.137		
Total	1488.887	79			



Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: ICV_Total

Tukey HSD

(I) Indigenous_ Community	(J) Indigenous_ Community	Mean Difference (I- J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Boro	Karbi	-.47143	.78340	.931	-2.5293	1.5864
	Tiwa	1.30220	.95418	.525	-1.2042	3.8086
	Dimasa	-8.42857*	.88279	.000	-10.7475	-6.1097
Karbi	Boro	.47143	.78340	.931	-1.5864	2.5293
	Tiwa	1.77363	.80463	.131	-.3400	3.8872
	Dimasa	-7.95714*	.71854	.000	-9.8446	-6.0697
Tiwa	Boro	-1.30220	.95418	.525	-3.8086	1.2042
	Karbi	-1.77363	.80463	.131	-3.8872	.3400
	Dimasa	-9.73077*	.90169	.000	-12.0993	-7.3622
Dimasa	Boro	8.42857*	.88279	.000	6.1097	10.7475

	Karbi	7.95714*	.71854	.000	6.0697	9.8446
	Tiwa	9.73077*	.90169	.000	7.3622	12.0993
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.						

Interpretation of Objective 1

To examine the differences in indigenous cultural values among students, statistical analyses were conducted using an independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The comparison was made with respect to gender, class level, and indigenous community background.

The independent samples t-test was applied to identify whether male and female students differed significantly in their indigenous cultural values. The results showed that male students ($M = 27.89$, $SD = 4.21$) and female students ($M = 28.06$, $SD = 4.59$) had almost similar mean scores. The obtained t-value was -0.166 with a significance value of 0.868 , which is higher than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the difference between male and female students was not statistically significant. This indicates that gender does not play a significant role in determining indigenous cultural values among students. Both male and female students demonstrate a similar level of connection with their cultural traditions, values, and indigenous practices.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare indigenous cultural values among students belonging to different classes (Class IX, X, XI, and XII). The results indicated that there was no significant difference among students of different classes ($F = 0.187$, $p = 0.905$). Since the significance value was greater than 0.05 , the null hypothesis of no difference among class groups was accepted. The findings suggest that the level of indigenous cultural values remains relatively consistent across different academic levels. Advancement in school level does not significantly influence students' cultural awareness and attachment to indigenous values.

Further, one-way ANOVA was used to examine differences among students belonging to different indigenous communities. The results revealed a statistically significant difference among community groups ($F = 55.534$, $p < .001$). The post-hoc Tukey test showed significant differences mainly between Dimasa students and other community groups such as Bodo, Karbi, and Tiwa. This indicates that indigenous cultural values vary significantly across communities. The variation may be associated with differences in cultural traditions, language practices, social structures, historical experiences, and community-based learning practices.

Overall, the findings suggest that indigenous cultural values are not significantly influenced by gender or class level; however, indigenous community identity has a significant influence on students' cultural values. The results highlight the importance of recognizing community-specific cultural practices and integrating indigenous knowledge systems into educational experiences in rural Assam.

Objective 2: To examine the relationship between indigenous cultural values and educational experiences of students in rural Assam.

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
ICV_Total	27.9625	4.34128	80
EE_total	32.4684	3.06274	79

Correlations			
		ICV_Total	EE_total
ICV_Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.056
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.623
	N	80	79
EE_total	Pearson Correlation	.056	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.623	
	N	79	79

Interpretation of Objective 2

To examine the relationship between indigenous cultural values and educational experiences of students, Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted. The descriptive statistics revealed that the mean score of indigenous cultural values (ICV_Total) was 27.96 with a standard deviation of 4.34, while the mean score of educational experiences (EE_total) was 32.46 with a standard deviation of 3.06.

The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the relationship between indigenous cultural values and educational experiences. The results indicated that the correlation coefficient between the two variables was $r = 0.056$ with a significance value of $p = 0.623$. Since the significance value is greater than the accepted level of significance ($p > 0.05$), the relationship between indigenous cultural values and educational experiences was found to be statistically insignificant.

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.056$) indicates a very weak positive relationship between indigenous cultural values and educational experiences. This means that students with higher indigenous cultural values do not necessarily show significantly better educational experiences within the present sample. Although indigenous cultural values may contribute to students' identity formation, social participation, and cultural awareness, the findings suggest that these values alone may not be a strong predictor of educational experiences.

The insignificant relationship may be explained by the influence of other educational and social factors, such as curriculum structure, teaching practices, school environment, availability of learning resources, language of instruction, and socio-economic conditions. These factors may play an important role in shaping students' educational experiences in rural Assam.

Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between indigenous cultural values and educational experiences of students is accepted. The findings highlight that while indigenous cultural values are important for preserving cultural identity and community knowledge, their direct association with students' formal educational experiences requires further investigation considering multiple contextual factors.

Findings of the Study

1. The study found that students in rural Assam possess a considerable level of indigenous cultural values, with a mean score of 27.96 (SD = 4.34). These values reflect cultural identity, respect for elders, community participation, traditional knowledge, and environmental awareness.

2. No significant difference was found in indigenous cultural values based on gender ($t = -0.166$, $p = 0.868$) and class level ($F = 0.187$, $p = 0.905$), indicating that cultural values remain consistent among male and female students and across different academic levels.
3. A significant difference was observed among students belonging to different indigenous communities ($F = 55.534$, $p < .001$). The Tukey HSD test showed significant differences mainly between Dimasa students and Bodo, Karbi, and Tiwa students, indicating the influence of community-specific cultural traditions and practices.
4. The relationship between indigenous cultural values and educational experiences was found to be positive but statistically insignificant ($r = 0.056$, $p = 0.623$). This suggests that while indigenous values contribute to students' identity and social development, educational experiences are also shaped by factors such as curriculum, teaching methods, language, and school environment.

Discussion

Indigenous cultural values represent an important foundation of education among the communities of rural Assam. These values are reflected through community-based learning, oral traditions, indigenous languages, respect for elders, ecological knowledge, and collective responsibility. Indigenous education extends beyond formal schooling and emphasizes holistic development by integrating intellectual, moral, social, and environmental dimensions of learning.

The educational philosophy underlying indigenous practices is closely associated with experiential learning, where knowledge is acquired through participation in everyday activities and interaction with the community. Indigenous epistemology recognizes multiple ways of knowing and challenges the dominance of standardized educational approaches. Therefore, incorporating indigenous knowledge systems, cultural practices, and local experiences into school education can strengthen cultural identity, promote inclusiveness, and create a more meaningful learning environment for students in rural Assam.

Conclusion

The study concludes that indigenous cultural values play a significant role in shaping the identity, moral development, and social learning experiences of students in rural Assam. Indigenous education reflects a holistic approach based on community participation, experiential learning, oral traditions, respect for elders, and harmony with nature. The findings indicate that while gender and class level do not significantly influence indigenous cultural values, differences among indigenous communities highlight the importance of diverse cultural traditions and knowledge systems. Although indigenous cultural values show a weak relationship with formal educational experiences, they remain essential for strengthening cultural identity and social responsibility among learners. Therefore, integrating indigenous knowledge, local languages, and cultural practices into school education is necessary to develop a culturally responsive, inclusive, and meaningful educational system in rural Assam.

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