

Title of Article: Cultural Dimensions of Health Behaviour: A Case Study of the Oraon Tribe

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Abstract: The tribal's are socio-economically lagged behind the non-tribals and have strict adherence to traditional ways of life which is resistant to modern health innovations. The Oraon tribe is a major tribal group in the Central tribal belt of India, a highly traditional and ethnocentric people. The objective of this paper is to throw light on some major cultural dimensions of health behavior of the Oraons and to suggest ways of promoting health education among them. The data used in this paper came from field survey conducted among the Oraons of Sundergarh district in the State of Orissa. The sample consists of 200 Oraon families, selected at random from 14 large and small villages that constitute a major Oraon pocket in the district of Sundergarh. The head of households of these Oraon families were treated as the respondents and were interviewed for gathering the relevant information. The bulk of the Oraon population lives under acute poverty, poor socio-economic conditions, rigid cultural norms and religious taboos. They attribute sickness and illness to the disappointment and curse of some supernatural power. The study also revealed poor sanitary conditions and use of unhygienic sources of drinking water. It was noticed that cultural taboos regarding food choices coupled with poverty results to widespread malnutrition among the Oraons. Finally some recommendations were proffered towards means and methods for imparting health education among them, such as letting them know the merits and effectiveness of the modern health care facilities available to them, income generating occupational empowerment in order to reduce the extent of poverty among them, use of specially developed audio-visual aids in imparting health education among these tribal population through periodic camps and informal meetings among others.

Key words: Oraon, tibal, culture, fatalism, traditional belief, food choices, health education