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Attitude of Indian Knowledge System among Undergraduate Students in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) encompasses a broad spectrum of indigenous knowledge, including philosophy, sciences, arts, architecture, and traditional practices. With the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizing the integration of IKS into higher education, it becomes critical to assess student attitudes toward this initiative. This study aims to explore the attitude of undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu toward IKS using a normative survey technique. A sample of 610 students across various disciplines was selected through stratified random sampling. The study employed a self-constructed attitude scale and analyzed the data using descriptive and differential statistical techniques. The findings indicated a moderately positive attitude towards IKS. Differential analysis revealed significant variations based on gender and but not on locality & family type. The implications for curriculum development and pedagogical strategies need to tailor each other.

Keywords: *Indian Knowledge System, Undergraduate Students, Attitude, Higher Education, National Education Policy 2020.*

1. INTRODUCTION

India's heritage stands as a remarkable example of intellectual depth, philosophical reflection, and scientific advancement that predates many modern systems of knowledge. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is not merely a collection of traditional practices; it is a vast repository of interconnected wisdom covering diverse domains such as medicine (Ayurveda), architecture (Vastu Shastra), astronomy, mathematics, metallurgy, arts, music, linguistics, and spirituality. This integrative system reflects a holistic worldview where education, ethics, and ecology coexist in harmony. In the present era of globalization, where western academic paradigms often dominate the educational discourse, the recognition and revival of IKS have become increasingly important for sustaining cultural identity, indigenous innovation, and value-based education.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has emphasized the urgent need to bring back the essence of IKS into the higher education framework. This integration aims not only to acquaint students with India's intellectual legacy but also to help them critically engage with it in modern contexts. Such an approach can promote interdisciplinary learning, nurture critical thinking, and instill pride in India's cultural and scientific achievements. However, despite policy directives, the success of IKS integration depends largely on how students perceive and accept these traditional forms of knowledge.

Undergraduate students represent the foundation of the future workforce, researchers, and educators. Their attitudes towards IKS will determine how effectively these concepts can be implemented and sustained in academic curricula. Tamil Nadu, known for its ancient traditions, temple architecture, and scholarly pursuits, offers a unique context for studying these attitudes. By examining how young learners in this region view IKS, this research sheds light on the broader acceptance and potential challenges of embedding indigenous wisdom into a modern, globally competitive educational environment.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into higher education, as proposed by the NEP 2020, reflects a transformative educational vision. However, policy implementation alone cannot guarantee success unless the learners—the ultimate beneficiaries—demonstrate genuine interest and positive attitudes toward the system. In this context, assessing the attitudes of undergraduate students becomes a crucial step in understanding the readiness and receptivity of the younger generation. Although numerous studies have explored IKS from philosophical and curricular perspectives, limited empirical research has focused on student perceptions, especially within Tamil Nadu's socio-cultural landscape.

Tamil Nadu stands at a unique intersection of ancient heritage and modern development. The state's long-standing engagement with literature, classical music, temple architecture, and mathematics exemplifies the richness of its knowledge systems. Yet, the influence of westernized education, digital transformation, and employability-driven curricula often shifts students' focus away from indigenous wisdom. This creates a potential gap between what is culturally rooted and what is academically pursued. Therefore, understanding how undergraduate students perceive IKS—whether they view it as valuable, outdated, or complementary to modern education—is essential for designing relevant educational reforms.

The need for this study also arises from the fact that attitudes shape behavior and learning outcomes. A positive attitude toward IKS can lead to greater engagement, curiosity, and respect for traditional sciences, while negative or indifferent attitudes can hinder integration efforts. Moreover, identifying variations in attitude based on gender, locality, or family type can help educators design more inclusive pedagogical approaches. For instance, if urban students show lesser interest than rural counterparts, targeted interventions can be planned to bridge this gap. Thus, the study not only fills a research void but also provides actionable insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators who aim to harmonize traditional wisdom with contemporary academic practices.

3. OBJECTIVES

- To assess the overall attitude of undergraduate students towards Indian knowledge system
- To find out whether there is any significant difference in attitude of under graduate students towards Indian knowledge system based on their Gender (Male/Female), Locality (Urban/Rural) and Family Type (Joint/Nuclear)

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Method

This study used a normative survey technique, which is suitable for assessing opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of a large population at a point in time.

4.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study was undergraduate students from arts and science colleges across Tamil Nadu. A sample of 610 students (310 male, 300 female) was selected using stratified random sampling, ensuring representation across locality and family type.

4.3 Tool for Data Collection

A self-constructed Indian Knowledge System Attitude Scale (IKSAS) was used, consisting of 25 items on a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). The scale covered domains such as cultural relevance, academic value, employability, and interest.

4.4 Statistical Techniques

- Descriptive Statistics: Mean, Standard Deviation
- Differential Statistics: t-test and ANOVA for gender, locality, and family type

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Descriptive Analysis

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
IKS	610	84.45	10.56

Based on the response against the statements of Indian Knowledge System Attitude Scale (IKSAS), mean ± one standard deviation technique was employed to fix the different levels of attitude such as low (below 70), moderate (70-95) and high (above 95)

The overall mean score of 84.45 (maximum possible score = 125) indicates a moderately positive attitude toward the Indian Knowledge System among students.

5.2 Differential Analysis

Gender

Demographical Variable	Sub Sample	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance at 5% level
Gender	Male	305	81.21	11.01	5.33	Significant
	Female	305	85.72	9.89		
locality	Urban	305	80.66	10.21	0.48	Not Significant
	Rural	305	80.26	10.19		
Family Type	Joint	271	83.91	10.31	0.97	Not Significant
	Nuclear	239	83.00	10.79		

The above Table shows that, male and female under graduate students significantly differ in their attitude towards IKS but not significantly differs the undergraduate students based on their locality and family type. It is inferred that the among the demographic variables taken for this study, gender only influencing factor in deciding the attitude of under graduate students towards Indian knowledge system.

6. CONCLUSION AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study emphasize that undergraduate students in Tamil Nadu exhibit a moderately positive attitude toward the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), indicating a growing awareness and acceptance of indigenous knowledge traditions within higher education. The results also reveal significant gender-based differences, with female students showing more favorable attitudes than males, while locality and family type did not significantly influence attitudes. This highlights that the perception of IKS is shaped more by personal engagement and cultural sensitivity than by social or environmental factors.

The study's conclusions hold several meaningful implications for educators and policymakers. First, there is a clear opportunity to integrate IKS content more dynamically within existing curricula. Educational institutions can design interdisciplinary courses linking IKS principles with modern subjects such as environmental science, biotechnology, architecture, and psychology. By doing so, IKS can move beyond being viewed as merely traditional or historical—it can become a living, evolving

body of knowledge relevant to 21st-century challenges.

Second, pedagogical innovation is necessary to make IKS engaging and relatable. Interactive workshops, field visits to heritage sites, and project-based learning on traditional technologies can foster experiential understanding. Teachers should be trained to contextualize IKS within global knowledge frameworks, enabling students to see how indigenous systems complement rather than compete with modern science.

Finally, the study underscores the need for policy-level advocacy to ensure that IKS is introduced systematically and sensitively. A gender-inclusive approach and awareness campaigns highlighting the modern applications of IKS—such as sustainable agriculture, holistic health, and architecture—can increase its appeal among students. Thus, the research reinforces the idea that integrating IKS into higher education is not just about preserving tradition but about building a balanced, culturally rooted, and forward-looking educational system that prepares students to navigate both heritage and modernity with equal competence.

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