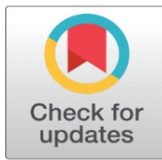


THE INTERPLAY OF TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE: A STUDY ON MOBILE PHONE PRACTICES AMONG MUKKUYA COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

The widespread use of digital technologies has expanded globally and penetrated even the most remote regions of the global south, including people living in underprivileged and marginalised conditions. Despite the increasing influence of mobile phones in all aspects of social life, there is limited knowledge about how mobile phone practices impact the local culture of the Mukkuva community in Kerala. Though Kerala has made remarkable socioeconomic progress, the Mukkuva fishing community remains marginalised and neglected. The fishers' exclusion from mainstream society, resulting from the caste system, has historically limited their interaction with others. This study employs in-depth interviews and non-participant observation to explore the mobile phone practices of the fishing community in two selected coastal villages of Kerala and how it affects the community's language and culture. Using the cultural identity framework of Stuart Hall and a thematic method of data analysis, the paper examines the changing dynamics of the relationship between the church and the community, the evolving self-concept of community members, and their economic activities. The research demonstrates the significance of mobile phones in the changing cultural dynamics of the Mukkuva community, highlighting its role in enabling increased communication and interaction with mainstream society. The study's findings suggest that mobile phones have enabled the community to create a new identity, distinct from their traditional practices, thereby allowing them to engage more actively in social, economic, and political activities. The paper concludes that the increasing use of mobile phones in marginalised communities provides an opportunity to bridge the gap between mainstream and marginalised societies, and encourages the empowerment of these groups.

Keywords: Mukkuva, Fishers, Mobile Phones, Cultural Identity, Language



1. INTRODUCTION

Many countries around the world have become accustomed to mobile communication. Mobile phone studies have emerged across a broad range of disciplines, though they are more prevalent in developing countries. Several studies have explored the factors contributing to the phenomenal rates of mobile adoption in the developing world, while others focus on barriers to or facilitators of mobile adoption [Allabouche et al. \(2016\)](#), [Contarello et al. \(2007\)](#), [Donner \(2009\)](#), [Marler \(2018\)](#).

Indigenous nations worldwide have urged their wish to be included in the information society. It includes the right to "participate in mainstream information and communication systems, both nationally and internationally, as well as their own ICT systems" [Joshi et al. \(2013\)](#).

Kerala is considered a unique example in development because of its successful performance in social sectors like health, education, and social welfare. Despite Kerala's successful performance in such sectors, the Mukkuva community is among one the deprived, socially, and economically 'backward' community in the state whose livelihood depends on marine fishing [Ashni and Santhosh \(2019\)](#).

1.1. MUKKUYA COMMUNITY

The social environment of the Mukkuva community is quite different from other agrarian, tribal, and caste communities due to their occupational nature as marine fishers [Mary \(2018\)](#). As part of the community's religious identity, it is considered a minority in India and marginal group due to its social and educational disadvantages. The community's efforts to participate effectively in fishing activities develop the language, communication methods and entertainment. These are kept exclusively separate from those of other cultures. The Mukkuva Catholic community, better known as Latin Catholics, are part of an ethnic community with features such as syncretic culture, religious identity, and caste consciousness due to their occupational relationship with the marine ecosystem [Raju \(2022\)](#).

Fishers' society in general, the Mukkuva community in particular, suffers from various problems and experiences with a different form of marginality. Mukkuva people in the Trivandrum district of Kerala are members of the Latin Catholic church. Even under their religious identity as 'Christians', the fishers couldn't fit into the upward mobility on the social ladder due to their occupation, and thus, they stayed outside of the Kerala model of development [Kurien \(1995\)](#). They remain excluded from mainstream society culturally, socially and have unequal access to opportunities for developmental means. Being one of the marginalised communities in India, the voices of the fishing community have seldom made it across the periphery of their lands. The indigenous language they converse in, the rough and tough attitude people assume from their body language, and the stereotypical notion that even their offspring are not fit for any other job have shunned and kept them in a marginalised condition all these years [Mary \(2018\)](#).

1.2. MOBILE PHONES AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The access to and adoption of mobile phones and the use of technology using this device among indigenous communities are dependent on factors such as literacy, accessibility, and techno literacy. Claims regarding the impact or advantages of telecentres, community kiosks and mobile phones should be analysed in the light of the social systems in which they operate rather than only based on a particular piece of technology [Steyn \(2016\)](#). The advent of mobile phones affected the Mukkuva community as well. It not only acts as a medium to stay connected with their friends and family through calls, texts or Facebook, but the convergence of mobile phones and social networking has become a forum for indigenous society to construct one's personal, social and political identity [Nielsen \(2019\)](#). Mobile phones undermine prior definitions of social situations, but they also provide definitions of new techno-social situations and new boundaries of identity and place [Ling \(2010\)](#). With smartphones, people can connect with others

who have similar interests, experiences, and circumstances using social media tools.

As with any technology, culture influences how it is adopted, and mobile technology is no different [Dyson et al. \(2015\)](#). [Baron \(2008\)](#) points out that mobile phone practices are shaped partly by their devices and partly by the culture and pragmatic needs of the society around them. This kind of 'domestication' of mobile phones are similar in the case of Mukkuva community. The people from the community are now uploading and sharing their own content to different social media platforms. In contrast to how outsiders perceive them, they are capable of narrating their own stories about their cultural practices and identity. As a result, they integrate their knowledge and customs with contemporary norms and discourses. In the context of this study, the term mobile phone practices refer to the diverse ways in which people use their mobile phones for various daily activities, particularly communication. This includes individuals who have migrated to other places for work and rely on their phones to stay connected with the community. Other practices include using mobile phones for payment systems, online learning, recording, creating, and sharing content through online platforms, etc.

The idea of 'culture' has been incorporated into many research areas. Cultural identity refers to the construction and cultivation of reality based on particular values, a reality in which the value system and the social system are entirely interwoven and imbued with the activity of each other [Servaes \(1989\)](#). Community members of the same culture share a common language and tradition. Identity is a mixture of many things, such as race, gender, religion, region, class, etc. The effect of such identity characteristics on an indigenous person is likely to change over time. Earlier, scholars considered identification with cultural groups to be obvious and stable [Ashmore et al. \(2001\)](#) but it is also contextual and dependent on temporal and spatial changes. In the globalised and mediated world with more intercultural exchanges, cultural identity is constantly negotiated, re-shaped and challenged through technology and communicative practices.

The importance of the mobile phone goes beyond easier conversation across geographies, a revolution in itself for a country that until 1991 had only one phone per 165 people. Mobile phones have drastically altered society's culture, politics, and arrangement of power [Jeffrey and Doron \(2013\)](#). Today both mobile and smartphones have become crucial in our life. It has become an essential device in both urban and rural areas. The studies on smartphones have focused on the effect of mobile phones on indigenous people's cultures and cultural identities [Greyling, and McNulty \(2011\)](#), [Owiny et al. \(2014\)](#), [Rice et al. \(2016\)](#). It opened the doors to align them with the mainstream communication technologies that appropriated their culture, lifestyles, literature, and thoughts [Nielsen \(2019\)](#). Cultural identity is generally recognised through indigenous oral practices among tribals and fishers. Thus, the local traditions and oral forms of communication practised by community members need more attention. Indigenous peoples, whose communication style is centered on oral communication, can benefit from mobile phones [Brady et al. \(2008\)](#). Walter Ong, one of the most influential scholars in the field of orality and literacy, carried out important studies and analysed the process of change in culture when new communication technologies were introduced.

Mobile phones are among the areas in indigenous ICT adoption that received much attention in academic research [Dyson and Brady \(2009\)](#), [Fakunle and Ajani \(2021\)](#), [Taylor \(2012\)](#). There are different studies on how mobile technologies are being embraced by Indigenous people worldwide. But there are few studies

conducted on how technological adoption affects the indigenous language and culture of the coastal community. Mobile phones give indigenous community members a platform for sharing and learning knowledge. Most studies on indigenous people point to their unique way of living and livelihood characteristics. Most indigenous peoples see themselves as distinct from mainstream society due to their historical connection to their territory before colonization [Dyson et al. \(2015\)](#). They have rich knowledge about their surroundings, environment, and their tradition. Studies that look at the cultural facets of mobile phones focused on the user dynamics in the urban areas of developed countries. [Sreekumar \(2011\)](#) posits that rural studies on the social aspects of mobile phones overlooked the cultural dimension.

1.3. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in two fishing villages located along the coast of Trivandrum district, Kerala - Pulluvila and Pozhiyoor. These villages have high population densities, with congested housing and fishing being the primary source of income for the community. The majority of men in the villages work as fishermen, while women are typically engaged in fish vending. The local church serves as a key civil society institution in these villages. The Mukkuva community in these villages has unique cultural practices and a distinct local dialect that differs from the Malayalam language commonly used in the region.

In the past, oral communication was the primary means of community engagement, given the high population density and limited space. However, in recent years, smartphone usage has become increasingly prevalent in the community, with at least one member of each family owning a smartphone. While older members of the community still rely on feature phones, the younger generation is more likely to use smartphones.

The use of technology has become more important for the community following the devastating effects of Cyclone Ockhi in 2017, which had a significant impact on the coastal villages. The Ockhi experience has made fishermen more cautious about the change in the weather. Hence, the fishermen now rely heavily on weather forecasting apps and GPS technology on their smartphones to help them predict weather conditions and make their working environment less hazardous.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study examines how indigenous Mukkuva community people access and utilize mobile phones and the internet in their mediated lives using the theory of cultural identity. Culture has long been seen as the driving force that influences people in a society to follow the norms of their collective identity. According to Stuart Hall, identities undergo constant transformation, transcending time, and space [Hall \(1989\)](#). The shift from spatial to material culture reflects the conceptual context of a society. Stuart Hall argues that cultural identity is not a matter of 'being' but instead 'becoming', similar is the condition with the usage of media through mobile phones among fishers.

Their mediated life becomes a factor in changing their lifestyle, culture, language, food habits, thoughts, and many other things. Foreign influences and images from the new global culture industries affect establishes traditions and customary ways of life. These time and space convergences are enormously seductive, impossible to reject and difficult to contain [Hall \(2008\)](#). [Yang et al. \(2021\)](#) in his study states that as a result of different living environments, historical

influences, and cultural influences, cultural identities do not remain the same forever. The end of colonialism and the rise of globalization requires scholars to shift their focus towards predicting the future culture of people, instead of solely relying on their cultural background to understand their identity.

To understand how and why mobile media technologies impact communication outcomes, an affordances approach to mobile mediated communication can be used [Schrock \(2015\)](#). [Peters \(2011\)](#) argues that in the affordance's perspective, technologies are evaluated in real – world contexts, balancing technological determinism and social constructivism. This paper draws on the concept of cultural identity and affordances approach to explain how the Mukkuva community people access and utilize mobile phones in their mediated lives.

3. METHOD

Data for this study has been collected directly from the members of the two villages taken up for the study. To investigate the negotiation of technology by the indigenous coastal fishers, we used non-participant observation and in-depth interviews with six residents of the two fishing villages of Trivandrum district in southern coastal Kerala. The interview participants included traditional fishers – those who go to the sea for the fish catch; and vending women – those who sell the fish at markets and young college students – undergraduate students.

Out of the six participants, none owned a landline phone. Five participants possessed a smartphone, and one had a feature phone. Among the one's possessing a smartphone, three used social media, while the other two never used it. One of the participants indicated using social media occasionally. The approximate number of incoming calls among the participants ranged between four to fourteen calls a day. While the number of outgoing calls ranged from five to fifteen. The research participants used Malayalam and the Mukkuva local dialect to communicate through the phone over text and voice calls. The younger people in the community use smartphones for various purposes, such as for money transactions, attending online classes, and browsing social media, among others. Older people primarily use their mobile phones to make voice calls. The term mobile phone is used interchangeably for both feature phones and smart phones in the study. Multiple visits to the two villages were made for non-participant observation, and field notes were taken by following the methods suggested by [Emerson et al. \(2011\)](#). Writing the field notes involve the inevitable process of 'selection', the researcher does not necessarily describe everything that happens around him/her but leaves out some details. Taking field notes involves deep immersion and the sense of place that such immersion enables the researcher to make detailed, contextual, and locally informed field notes, i.e., thick description. Employing non – participant observation method allows the researcher to adopt the position of an outsider and attempts to distance himself/herself from the accepted categorizations and evaluations [Ciesielska et al. \(2018\)](#). Interview questions mainly focused on mobile phone use, ownership, social media usage, the language used, day-to-day activities, etc. Semi-structured interviews helped to give the participants space and decision-making ability to examine their own experiences. A rapport was created with the research participants to make the interviews as friendly as possible, and a conversational style was used to collect all the responses. The responses were recorded with a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim later.

Detailed field notes and verbatim transcripts of interviews were analysed thematically. Thematic data analysis identifies patterns or themes within

qualitative data [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#). This method of analysis identifies key themes, i.e., patterns in data that are interesting or important, and uses these themes to answer research questions. Thematic analysis is an interactive process of interpretation of messages, with some thematic structure as the outcome [Castleberry and Nolen \(2018\)](#). The researchers first got familiar with the data, created preliminary codes, outlined recurring ideas, reviewed the themes, defined, and named the themes, and did the analysis by writing the report.

4. RESULTS

Following the thematic analysis method of data analysis, the following broad themes that reflect the Mukkuva community's understanding of negotiations with mobile phones have been identified. They embody the continuous process of acceptance, rejection, internalization, and appropriation of technology among the community members.

4.1. CHANGING DYNAMICS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH

The rapid proliferation of technology in the community has resulted in changes in the relationship between the church and the community members. The community members have started depending more on the mobile phone than the church for information related to activities surrounding livelihood.

I used to wait to get information from the church about the weather conditions at sea. After getting their permission, I used to go to the sea for fishing. But nowadays, my son tells me about the latest updates from the government using his phone. If there is a warning from the government due to bad weather conditions, I would be able to know about it without delay. (Respondent 1)

The church in the community impacts every aspect of their life, shaping and mediating how they interact with the state and other members of the community. Through youth clubs, Basic Christian Communities (BCCs -family units under the church) and parish meetings, the church disseminates the ideologies and information among the community members. It is also essential to analyse the role of civil society to understand the everyday negotiations of the Mukkuva people with the church. As the most powerful agent of the fishers' spiritual, political, and social dynamics, the Latin Catholic church has a monopoly in representing the community in various environments and spearheading them. Even though mobile phones have brought changes to the dynamics of the relationship between the church and the community members, the church still holds authority over many aspects of the Mukkuva people's lives.

It is now easier for us to get information related to weather, govt schemes and other important details through mobile phones and the internet. But we follow the words of our church priest. Our decisions are always influenced by the church, not technology. (Respondent 2)

Even within the community, the hierarchical structure exists based on educational, social, and economic capital. In contrast with the upper strata, the lower strata of the community whose livelihood depended solely on fishing are more controlled by the church, which exerts significant influence over their political, economic, and social lives. During the field visit, the field researcher observed that people find mobile phones more reliant because they provide instant information. Even though they widely use mobile phones for fetching news,

information, and entertainment, their lives are influenced by the church. Many people consider mobile phones essential to their daily lives, while others see them as a primary communication tool. Mukkuva, a community heavily influenced by the Catholic church [Sundar \(2012\)](#), appropriated mobile phones in a way that changed their relationship with the church. Their social relationship, which the church shaped, has been affected. Before the advent of mobile phones, the Mukkuva people, especially those who go to the sea, tended to listen only to the church's instructions without giving much importance to other sources of information. The information for which they relied upon the church ranged from weather to health and government schemes to children's education. However, the entry of mobile phones into their lives has changed the dynamics of information gathering among community members. Now they gather information from various mobile phone-based sources like applications, social media platforms and websites as opposed to the church, which used to be the primary source of information before. The church in the community has leverage over every aspect of their life, shaping and mediating how they interact with the state and other community members.

4.2. THE SENSE OF BEING A MUKKUVA

The media and the power structures create stereotypes of fishers as rude, arrogant, and illiterate. The spoken language of the coastal people has been unnecessarily corrupted in movies and television serials. Visual media reflects the deep structural biases prevalent against the community in society. With the mobile phone, the community has obtained a space for representing themselves in their own perspective.

I used to hide my identity as a 'Mukkuva' boy from my friends in my college. I didn't want to get stereotyped notions from them. But through the social media platform, I started posting about several issues faced by the community along with some photographs. Even my head of the department shared one of my posts on his FB page. I was more confident in expressing my community identity with the help of a virtual platform. (Respondent 3)

NGOs formed by Mukkuva students have websites, and social media handles to present their views on various political and social issues. Through social media platforms, individuals can upload videos, share interests, connect with others, and join groups [Owiny et al. \(2014\)](#). Youths and students in the community use their smartphones to create posts on contemporary issues and upload them on different social media platforms.

The media always tries to portray our community as uncivilised. They always had a preconceived notion about us. But with the help of Facebook, we created our page and started making new content. (Respondent 4)

One of the participants described an incident which happened during the Covid -19 pandemic. When the health workers arrived in one of the coastal villages, a group of villagers allegedly used foul language and spat on those health workers. The reason for such behaviour by the villagers is stated to be the frustration caused among them due to the ill-treatment given to them at the first-line treatment centres. Though the incident happened because of just a few villagers the whole community was portrayed as uncivilised by the media. As a community member, one of the respondents wrote a Facebook post criticising such stereotypes by the media. Such expressions, visible to the larger public, by the Mukkuva people were not possible before the advent of smartphones. Now they have more confidence to express their own identities and imaginations to the world at large. The field researcher observed throughout the fieldwork that mobile

phones enabled community members a creative opportunity to criticise the stereotypes about the community created by others and portray themselves according to their own imagination. Those who were dissatisfied with the mainstream media representation of their community saw the individual expressions on social media as a way of challenging the many stereotypes and notions about the community. Many members of the coastal community during their interactions with the field researcher frequently expressed their sense of inferiority to the people living in the mainstream society and that they were frustrated at the continued undesirable media portrayal of the Mukkuva people. With the help of mobile phones, the community members themselves have criticised this stigmatisation of coastal identity. Through blog posts, comments, and videos on digital media platforms the community have started to respond to this negative portrayal.

4.3. MOBILE PHONE AS AN ENABLER OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Before the arrival of mobile phones, the fishers after their catch had to physically go to different markets to know where they could get maximum profit. Using mobile phones, they just have to make a simple phone call to decide where to go and sell their fish. It has enhanced the profits of all the community members involved in the fish business and also benefited the consumers. Mobile phone use has helped in decreasing price variations in the market and wastage of the catch. Before the adoption of mobile phones, beach auctions were the primary mechanism for sales.

As a fish vending woman, I had to go to different places without knowing if someone was already there to sell the fish. It created competition, and we earned less. But today, I can call my other co-working women and go to an area where no one else is selling fish. We can choose each location by communicating effectively through our mobile phones. (Respondent 5)

Mobile communication technologies, especially specialised applications on smartphones, have enhanced the standard of living of fishermen by providing various information related to sailing, including weather conditions, wind speed and the presence of traffic. This helps the fishers expand the range of their fishing spots by informing each other of places with the best catch as well. One of the respondents shared his experience of using such an application.

I have been using mKrishi application for the past few years. This mobile application gives me information regarding potential fishing zone, sea surface temperature and the presence of small organisms which form the food of several food species. (Respondent 6)

Apart from using mobile phone for business transactions, it is also being used for doing ordinary transactions. A distinct advantage has been put forward by one of the respondents. It was very helpful to the respondent, who belongs to one of the many women's self-help groups in the village that produce and sell handmade goods, as it enabled her to not only conduct business using WhatsApp, but also to text her friends and relatives.

During the past years, I was afraid even to make a phone call. I always thought of it as an unnecessary thing to do. Now, I have a smartphone which I earned using my own money. I am an active member of one of the self-help groups in my area. I have created a WhatsApp group to give information. Sometimes I just use it for sending good morning messages. (Respondent 4)

The women participants confided to the field researcher that, for several years, primarily men used mobile phones in the community. Although the women fish vendors had to sell their fish door-to-door in nearby towns and cities they did not have access to mobile phones for using it for their business. At the same time, men were actively using mobile phones to sell fish. Slowly women also got access to mobile phones to communicate their locations and to find better fish markets by making calls. As a result, mobile phones enabled them to sell fish in distant localities while still keeping in touch with their families, thus enabling them to seek assistance if necessary. This has increased their greater participation in economic activities as they could now enter into business deals with people far from their traditional areas of operation.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that mobile phone practices of the Mukkuva community have a role in shaping their sense of belongingness, relationship with the church, and economic activities. Earlier, community members found it difficult to express themselves and embrace their identity due to stereotyped notions about their community. Mobile communication technologies play a vital role in giving a platform to community members to represent themselves. The dynamics of the relationship between the church and the people in the community have undergone a change due to the everyday mobile phone practices of the Mukkuva community. Apart from its role as an international institution, the church also represents a minority group like the Mukkuva community on a national level. The catholic church has introduced different associational forms in the community such as BCCs, church councils, youth groups and students' units in order to maintain legitimacy with the community members. Various levels of interaction exist within the church, including the relationship between the church and the state, the church and its local community members, and the church in national and international level. These functions are mediated at different levels by parish priests, including those from fishing villages. Along with other community representatives such as Panchayat members, Ward members, Asha workers, etc., the priests represent the community at various forums. Church as a civil society still holds more authority over technology interference, despite a transformation in the relationship between the church and its members. As [Sundar \(2012\)](#) states in her study, church represents the polyvalence of sphere as the civil society. It embodies a variety of concepts such as faith, identity, and governance. Study findings also show that mobile phones are very distinctive because they enable community members to conduct business transactions as well as ordinary transactions.

According to [Hall \(1989\)](#), there are two ways in which cultural identity can be explained. The first is based on one's shared culture and the similarities found in a group. Another one is about the constant transformation of cultural identity. It emphasises the similarities and differences among an imagined cultural group. As marginalised groups struggle for representation, cultural identity is constantly negotiated, contested, and resisted. Traditions, customs, and religion all contribute to cultural meaning and identity [Hall \(2008\)](#). Globalisation and modern communication systems have influenced the spread of shared meaning systems across time and space. Fishers in the community relied heavily on their traditional knowledge, and the church was their primary source of information. They hardly got any chances to talk with outsiders. But after using mobile phones, they have started seeking information through various mobile phone applications. The church in the community plays a significant role in nurturing the sense of

belonging among the community members. Prevalent use of mobile phones is now influencing this traditional notion of cultural identity. The church was not seen to be taking much attention to the need for challenging stereotypical portrayals of media, but the mobile phone has given a platform to challenge such portrayals. Community members use social media platforms and mobile applications to combat stereotypes and portrayals against them in the media. It represented new kinds of identities and new ways of 'being a Mukkuva'. The affordances of mobile phones also play a vital role here. The affordance approach provides a framework for studying how technologies such as mobile media are integrated into routines, affecting subsequent communication patterns [Schrock \(2015\)](#). The results of this study are similar to the observations of [Steyn \(2016\)](#) who explained that mobile phones should be analysed in the light of the social systems in which they operate rather than only on the basis of a particular piece of technology. Marginalised communities like the tribal communities and fishers have not reaped the benefits of the internationally acclaimed model of high social progress in the state of Kerala. One's identity is influenced by how they are perceived and classified by others and themselves [Voicu \(2013\)](#). The narratives of the self-construction of identity by the people are determined to a large extent by their interactions with others. As [Heersmink \(2023\)](#) suggested, institutions, practices, and artefacts are all ways through which cultural identity is expressed.

This study on the coastal community people of the southern part of Kerala has shown that the negotiation of technology by the indigenous fishers is transforming their cultural practices and local dialect. The coastal community members are conscious of the process of adopting the affordances of mobile phones because they prefer to use mobile phones based on their needs. Beyond the subject-object relation, mobile phones are giving meaning to the person. Mobile phones act as a channel for those indigenous people whose communication style mainly depends on their culture. As [McLuhan, \(1964\)](#) argued that we shape our tools, and after that, they shape us. The findings of this study support this notion.

Previous studies on mobile communication technologies focused on the changes induced by the technology in different cultural contexts and environments [Dyson et al. \(2015\)](#), [Dyson and Brady \(2009\)](#), [Ling \(2010\)](#), [Sreekumar \(2011\)](#). The literature lacked the study of mobile phone practices among the Mukkuva fishing community in Kerala. With the decrease in mobile phone prices, its use has expanded rapidly in the community. Initially, smartphones were mainly used by the younger generation. But today, the older generation people are requesting them to teach these technologies. It should be noted that a vast majority of the older generation still prefer to use old feature phones instead of smart phones, which is used primarily for making voice calls especially when they go to the sea, they call home only if there is an emergency. The use of smartphones and social media applications is also highly prevalent among women. Many fish vending women have installed money transaction applications in their devices to simplify money transactions.

Accessibility and techno literacy play a significant role in indigenous communities' access to and use of mobile phones and technology. It is quite evident from the responses of the participants that the church spearheads and mediates political actions among the community members. However, this dynamic is being affected by mobile phone communication technologies in the various social, political, and economic spheres of the Mukkuva community. This study provides literature on a marginalised community's contextualisation of mobile phone practices.

6. CONCLUSION

The Mukkuva community has a long history of adapting their fishing practices and equipment to suit changing circumstances. Despite their resistance to the mechanization of fishing due to its negative impact on the environment and local livelihoods, the community has embraced mobile technology as a valuable tool for cultural enrichment. The use of mobile phone has become a vital means for the community to engage in language development, communication, and entertainment.

The preliminary findings of this study suggest that the use of mobile phone has had a profound impact on the cultural identity of the marginalized Mukkuva community. The adoption of mobile technology has accelerated the process of the community's transformation, with the outcome of this transformation being highly dependent on the resources and knowledge of those who use the technology. Furthermore, the study highlights the significant changes brought about by mobile phones on the culture, politics, and power dynamics of society, leading to a clear division in traditional language usage among different age groups on social media.

While the limited interviews conducted with a small sample size of the community were enlightening, they serve only as a starting point for future research. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of mobile phones in the lives of the Mukkuva people, there is a need for further research that follows different epistemologies and employs other methods. By doing so, we can better comprehend the impact of technology on the cultural identity and livelihoods of the Mukkuva community.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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