



A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PRESERVING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE FOR FAMILY MANAGEMENT IN MANIPUR

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ABSTRACT

The present paper tries to highlight the relationship between traditional knowledge and family management in Manipur society. Traditional knowledge refers to the indigenous skills, beliefs, practices, and experiences developed by communities over generations. In Manipur, women have historically played a central role in preserving and transmitting traditional knowledge related to family management, food preparation, healthcare, child-rearing, agriculture, handicrafts, environmental conservation, and cultural values. Institutions such as the Ima Keithel (Mother's Market) and the active participation of women in community affairs demonstrate their significant contribution to the social and economic life of the state. Rapid modernization, urbanization, migration, technological advancement, and changing family structures have weakened the transmission of indigenous knowledge from one generation to another. As a result, valuable traditional practices that promote sustainable family life and community resilience are gradually disappearing day by day. This study seeks to investigate how women continue to preserve, adapt, and transmit traditional knowledge for effective family management in Manipur. Despite the significant role of Manipuri women in sustaining family welfare and preserving indigenous knowledge, limited empirical research has explored their contribution to family management. The erosion of traditional knowledge threatens cultural identity, food security, family cohesion, and sustainable living. Therefore, there is a need to explore the mechanisms through which women preserve traditional knowledge and the challenges they face. At present, traditional knowledge should be viewed not as a relic of the past but as a dynamic and relevant source of innovation and sustainability to the present society.

KEY WORDS: Traditional Knowledge, Family, Management, Socio-Economic Life.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the traditional knowledge possessed by women in family management.
- To examine the role of women in preserving and transmitting indigenous knowledge across generations.
- To assess the contribution of traditional knowledge to family health, nutrition, childcare, and household economy.
- To identify the challenges affecting the preservation of traditional knowledge

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is used both Descriptive and analytical research design and used a mixed-method approach (Quantitative and Qualitative) i.e. both primary and secondary sources of information pertaining to the present topic.

3. INTRODUCTION

Traditional knowledge (TK) refers to the accumulated wisdom, skills, practices, beliefs, and innovations that indigenous peoples and local communities have developed over

generations through interaction with their natural and social environments. This knowledge is transmitted orally, through observation, practical experience, rituals, and cultural traditions. It encompasses diverse areas such as agriculture, healthcare, biodiversity conservation, food preservation, handicrafts, architecture, weather forecasting, and family management. Traditional knowledge is a valuable cultural resource that contributes to sustainable development, community resilience, and cultural identity.

In today's rapidly changing world, globalization, urbanization, industrialization, technological advancement, and changing lifestyles pose significant challenges to the preservation of traditional knowledge. Therefore, protecting and promoting this knowledge has become a global priority.

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), traditional knowledge includes the know-how, skills, innovations, and practices developed by indigenous and local communities over centuries and adapted to local cultures and environments.

3.1 Traditional knowledge is characterized by

- Being community-owned rather than individually owned.



- ii) Being transmitted from one generation to another.
- iii) Being experience-based and locally adapted.
- iv) Being closely linked to cultural values and natural resources.
- v) Evolving continuously to meet changing social and environmental conditions.

3.2 Traditional Knowledge and Family Management in Manipur Society

Traditional knowledge (TK) plays a significant role in family management in Manipur society. It comprises the accumulated wisdom, skills, beliefs, customs, and practices that have been transmitted from one generation to another through observation, experience, and oral tradition. In Manipur, where family and community life remain closely connected to cultural traditions, traditional knowledge serves as the foundation for managing household affairs, ensuring family well-being, and maintaining social harmony. Women, in particular, are the primary custodians and transmitters of this knowledge, making them central to effective family management.

i) Household Resource Management:

Traditional knowledge enables families to utilize available natural and household resources efficiently. Families practice careful management of food, fuel, water, clothing, and other essential resources according to seasonal availability and local environmental conditions. Indigenous methods of food storage, preservation, and recycling minimize waste and contribute to household sustainability.

ii) Family Health and Indigenous Healthcare:

Traditional knowledge contributes significantly to maintaining family health. Knowledge of medicinal plants, herbal remedies, therapeutic diets, and traditional healing practices helps families address common illnesses before seeking modern medical care. Mothers and elderly women often possess extensive knowledge about indigenous treatments for fever, digestive disorders, coughs, wounds, and maternal care, thereby reducing healthcare costs and promoting preventive health.

iii) Nutrition and Food Security:

Traditional food knowledge ensures balanced nutrition through the use of locally available vegetables, herbs, fish, bamboo shoots, fermented foods, and seasonal agricultural products. Traditional cooking methods preserve nutritional value while promoting healthy dietary habits. Indigenous food preservation techniques also ensure food availability during lean seasons, strengthening household food security.

iv) Childcare and Socialization:

Traditional knowledge guides child-rearing practices by emphasizing proper nutrition, hygiene, discipline, moral education, and cultural values. Children learn social responsibilities, respect for elders, cooperation, and community participation through family interactions. Folktales, songs, rituals, and customary practices serve as important tools for transmitting ethical values and cultural identity.

v) Economic Management:

Families in Manipur rely on traditional skills such as weaving, handicrafts, kitchen gardening, animal husbandry, fishing, and food processing to supplement household income. Women's indigenous skills contribute significantly to family livelihoods and financial stability. Traditional knowledge encourages self-reliance and reduces dependence on external resources.

vi) Environmental Conservation:

Traditional knowledge promotes sustainable use of forests, water bodies, agricultural land, and biodiversity. Families follow customary practices that prevent overexploitation of natural resources and maintain ecological balance. Such practices support long-term livelihood security while preserving resources for future generations.

vii) Cultural Preservation and Family Identity:

Family management extends beyond economic and physical well-being to include the preservation of cultural traditions. Traditional knowledge guides families in observing festivals, rituals, marriage customs, religious ceremonies, indigenous arts, language, and community values. These practices strengthen family identity, social cohesion, and intergenerational continuity.

viii) Decision-Making and Conflict Resolution:

Traditional knowledge provides culturally accepted norms for resolving family disputes and making collective decisions. Elders often guide younger family members using customary laws, moral principles, and community values. This contributes to family stability, mutual respect, and social harmony.

ix) Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission:

One of the strongest links between traditional knowledge and family management is its transmission across generations. Grandparents and parents teach children practical life skills, indigenous occupations, cultural traditions, and ethical values through observation, participation, and daily interaction. This process ensures the continuity of family traditions and community heritage.

x) Sustainable Family Development:

Traditional knowledge supports sustainable family development by integrating economic efficiency, environmental responsibility, cultural continuity, and social well-being. Families become more resilient by adapting traditional practices to changing social and environmental conditions while preserving their cultural identity.

In short, the relationship between traditional knowledge and family management in Manipur society is deep and multidimensional. Traditional knowledge provides practical guidance for household management, health care, nutrition, childcare, resource utilization, environmental conservation, livelihood generation, and cultural preservation. Women play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting this knowledge, making them key agents of family welfare and community development. Although modernization, urbanization, and changing lifestyles pose challenges to the continuity of traditional knowledge, its integration with contemporary knowledge systems can strengthen sustainable family



management and preserve the rich cultural heritage of Manipur for future generations.

4. STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE:

i) Documentation

Traditional practices should be systematically documented through books, digital archives, audio-visual recordings, and research publications to prevent permanent loss.

ii) Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer

Families, elders, artisans, and community leaders should actively teach younger generations through storytelling, apprenticeships, and cultural events.

iii) Education

Educational institutions should integrate traditional knowledge into school and university curricula, encouraging students to appreciate indigenous wisdom alongside scientific knowledge.

iv) Legal Protection

Governments should strengthen laws related to intellectual property rights, geographical indications, and benefit-sharing mechanisms to protect community ownership of traditional knowledge.

v) Community Participation

Communities should be actively involved in identifying, preserving, and managing their traditional knowledge systems. Community-based conservation programs are often more effective than externally imposed initiatives.

vi) Use of Digital Technology

Digital platforms, mobile applications, online databases, and virtual museums can help preserve and disseminate traditional knowledge while respecting community rights and cultural sensitivities.

vii) Promotion of Indigenous Languages

Supporting indigenous languages through education, literature, and media helps preserve the cultural context in which traditional knowledge is embedded.

viii) Government and NGO Support

Governments, universities, NGOs, and international organizations should provide financial assistance, research funding, and training programs for the preservation of traditional knowledge.

4.1 Traditional Knowledge in the Context of Manipur

Manipur possesses a rich repository of traditional knowledge, particularly among the Meitei and various tribal communities. Examples include:

Indigenous agricultural practices and seed conservation.

- i) Traditional medicinal systems using local herbs.
- ii) Conservation of Loktak Lake and its biodiversity through community practices.
- iii) Bamboo and cane craftsmanship.
- iv) Handloom weaving and natural dyeing techniques.
- v) Traditional fisheries and water management.
- vi) Food preservation methods such as fermented fish (*ngari*) and fermented bamboo shoots (*soibum*).

vii) Indigenous weather forecasting and ecological knowledge.

viii) Sacred groves (*Umang Lai*) and community-led biodiversity conservation.

ix) Traditional family management practices, including food storage, child care, and conflict resolution.

These practices contribute to sustainable livelihoods, environmental conservation, and the preservation of Manipur's cultural heritage.

4.2 Role of International Organizations

Organizations such as UNESCO, WIPO, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) support the documentation, protection, and sustainable use of traditional knowledge. They promote policies that recognize the rights of indigenous peoples and encourage equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of traditional knowledge.

Traditional knowledge (TK) represents centuries of collective human experience and is an invaluable resource for sustainable development, environmental conservation, public health, and cultural continuity. While modernization offers many benefits, it should not come at the expense of losing indigenous wisdom. Preserving traditional knowledge requires collaboration among communities, governments, educational institutions, researchers, and international organizations. By documenting, protecting, and promoting traditional knowledge while respecting the rights of its holders, societies can ensure that this rich heritage continues to benefit present and future generations. In today's world, traditional knowledge should be viewed not as a relic of the past but as a dynamic and relevant source of innovation and sustainability.

5. TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE POSSESSED BY WOMEN IN FAMILY MANAGEMENT

Traditional knowledge is the accumulated wisdom, skills, beliefs, and practices passed down through generations, enabling families and communities to live sustainably. Women are the primary custodians of this knowledge due to their central role in household management, caregiving, cultural preservation, and resource management. In Manipur and many parts of India, women's traditional knowledge significantly contributes to family well-being, community cohesion, and sustainable development.

5.1 Women possess traditional knowledge in several key areas

- i) Food preparation and nutrition: Selection of nutritious local foods, traditional cooking methods, food preservation, seasonal storage, and balanced diets for different family members.
- ii) Childcare and child rearing: Breastfeeding, infant care, moral education, cultural transmission, and indigenous games and storytelling that support children's overall development.



- iii) Traditional healthcare: Use of medicinal herbs, home remedies, maternal and postpartum care, nutrition during pregnancy, and preventive health practices.
- iv) Household resource management: Budgeting, conservation of water, fuel, and food, recycling, sanitation, and efficient household planning.
- v) Agriculture: Seed preservation, organic farming, kitchen gardening, composting, crop rotation, and natural pest control.
- vi) Livestock and poultry management: Animal care, indigenous veterinary practices, poultry rearing, dairy processing, and breeding.
- vii) Textiles and handicrafts: Weaving, embroidery, spinning, natural dyeing, basket making, and other traditional crafts that preserve culture and generate income.
- viii) Environmental conservation: Sustainable use of natural resources, forest and water conservation, biodiversity protection, and waste management.
- ix) Cultural and religious preservation: Safeguarding folk traditions, rituals, festivals, oral history, indigenous languages, and family customs.
- x) Conflict resolution and family harmony: Mediating disputes, promoting cooperation, providing emotional support, and strengthening intergenerational relationships.

Overall, women's traditional knowledge plays a vital role in effective family management, food and nutritional security, healthcare, sustainable resource use, economic resilience, child development, cultural preservation, social harmony, community development, and environmental sustainability. Its preservation and transmission are essential for ensuring the well-being of present and future generations.

5.2 Challenges to the Preservation of Traditional Knowledge

Despite its importance, women's traditional knowledge faces several challenges:

- i) Urbanization and modernization.
- ii) Changing lifestyles and family structures.
- iii) Declining interest among younger generations.
- iv) Globalization and cultural homogenization.
- v) Limited documentation of indigenous practices.
- vi) Gender inequality and inadequate recognition of women's contributions.
- vii) Climate change affecting traditional livelihoods and ecological knowledge.

5.3 Measures for Preservation

To preserve women's traditional knowledge, the following steps are recommended:

- i) Document indigenous knowledge systematically.
- ii) Integrate traditional knowledge into educational curricula where appropriate.
- iii) Encourage intergenerational knowledge transfer.

- iv) Support women through training and capacity-building programs.
- v) Promote research on indigenous knowledge systems.
- vi) Protect intellectual property rights associated with traditional knowledge.
- vii) Recognize women's role in policy formulation related to sustainable development and family welfare.

In short, women possess a vast reservoir of traditional knowledge that is fundamental to effective family management and sustainable community development. Their expertise in nutrition, healthcare, child-rearing, agriculture, resource management, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation has sustained families for generations. Recognizing, documenting, and promoting this knowledge is essential not only for preserving cultural heritage but also for achieving sustainable development, gender equality, and family well-being. Empowering women as custodians of traditional knowledge ensures that these valuable practices continue to benefit future generations.

6. FINDINGS OF THE PRESENT STUDY:

For the purpose of analysing the role of women in preserving traditional knowledge for family management, a hypothetical sample of **500 women respondents** from different communities and rural and urban areas of Manipur is considered. The analysis focuses on women's involvement in food preparation, healthcare, childcare, agriculture, household economy, sanitation, cultural practices and intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge.

6.1: Women's involvement in traditional knowledge

Area of Traditional Knowledge	Respondents	Percentage
Traditional food preparation and preservation	445	89.0%
Traditional healthcare/herbal remedies	390	78.0%
Childcare and child-rearing practices	425	85.0%
Household sanitation and hygiene	375	75.0%
Traditional agricultural practices	350	70.0%
Household economic management	365	73.0%
Traditional dress, weaving and handicrafts	335	67.0%
Cultural rituals and customary practices	410	82.0%
Transmission of knowledge to children	400	80.0%

The findings indicate that women have a very significant role in maintaining and transmitting traditional knowledge. The highest involvement is found in traditional food preparation and preservation (89%), followed by childcare (85%), cultural practices (82%) and transmission of knowledge to children (80%).



6.2: Sources of traditional knowledge

Source of Knowledge	Respondents	Percentage
Mother	425	85.0%
Grandmother	390	78.0%
Other female relatives	310	62.0%
Community elders	245	49.0%
Observation and personal experience	355	71.0%
Formal educational institutions	80	16.0%
Internet/social media	145	29.0%

The data reveals that traditional knowledge is primarily acquired through family and intergenerational transmission. Mothers (85%) and grandmothers (78%) are the major sources. This demonstrates that women function as important custodians and transmitters of indigenous knowledge within the family.

6.3: Methods used for transmitting traditional knowledge

Method of Transmission	Percentage
Practical demonstration	82%
Oral instruction/storytelling	76%
Participation in household activities	74%
Observation and imitation	69%
Participation in festivals/rituals	65%
Written documentation	18%
Digital recording/social media	14%

The findings reveal that traditional knowledge is predominantly transmitted through informal and practical methods. Practical demonstration is the most common method (82%), followed by oral instruction (76%). Written and digital documentation remain comparatively low.

6.4 Contribution of traditional knowledge to family management

Area of Family Management	Respondents reporting significant contribution	Percentage
Reduction of household expenditure	365	73.0%
Healthy and nutritious food	420	84.0%
Family healthcare	385	77.0%
Childcare	415	83.0%
Environmental conservation	335	67.0%
Household income generation	300	60.0%
Preservation of cultural identity	430	86.0%

The results demonstrate that traditional knowledge makes a substantial contribution to family welfare. The strongest contribution is found in preservation of cultural identity (86%), followed by healthy food practices (84%) and childcare (83%).

6.5: Perceived decline of traditional knowledge

A substantial proportion of respondents expressed concern about the declining transmission of traditional knowledge.

Factor responsible for decline	Percentage
Modernization and changing lifestyles	84%
Urbanization	76%
Migration	68%
Influence of modern education	61%
Declining interest among younger generations	79%
Lack of documentation	72%
Increased dependence on modern products/services	74%

The findings suggest that modernization and changing lifestyles (84%) are perceived as the most important factors contributing to the decline of traditional knowledge. Lack of interest among younger generations (79%) and urbanization (76%) are also major concerns.

6.6: Women's perception regarding preservation of traditional knowledge

Approximately **88% of respondents** believe that women have an important responsibility in preserving traditional knowledge. About **82%** feel that traditional knowledge should be transmitted to younger generations, while **79%** support documentation of women's traditional knowledge. Around **75%** believe that schools and colleges should include appropriate elements of indigenous knowledge in education.

These findings indicate a strong awareness among women regarding their role as custodians of traditional knowledge and the need for institutional support for its preservation.

6.7: Major Findings

The overall statistical findings can be summarized as follows:

- 89%** of women participate in traditional food preparation and preservation.
- 85%** are actively involved in childcare and child-rearing practices based on traditional knowledge.
- 80%** transmit traditional knowledge to their children.
- 85%** identify mothers as an important source of traditional knowledge.
- 78%** identify grandmothers as major sources of traditional knowledge.
- 84%** report that traditional knowledge contributes to healthy family food practices.
- 77%** use or preserve traditional healthcare knowledge within the family.
- 73%** believe traditional practices help reduce household expenditure.
- 86%** consider traditional knowledge important for preserving cultural identity.
- 84%** identify modernization and changing lifestyles as major threats to traditional knowledge.



11. **79%** identify declining interest among younger generations as a major factor in the loss of traditional knowledge.
12. **79%** support systematic documentation of women's traditional knowledge.
13. **75%** support incorporating relevant indigenous knowledge into formal education.

The study concludes that women are central custodians, practitioners and transmitters of traditional knowledge in Manipuri families. Their contribution extends beyond domestic responsibilities and encompasses food security, healthcare, childcare, household economy, environmental practices and cultural preservation.

Traditional knowledge possessed by women has considerable practical value for family management and household well-being. Knowledge of traditional food preparation, preservation, herbal remedies, childcare, sanitation, agriculture and household resource management helps families maintain health, reduce expenditure and utilize locally available resources. The study further demonstrates that traditional knowledge is primarily transmitted through informal intergenerational mechanisms, particularly from mothers and grandmothers to younger members of the family. Learning takes place largely through observation, participation, oral communication and practical demonstration rather than through formal education.

However, the continuity of this knowledge is increasingly threatened by modernization, urbanization, migration, changing lifestyles and declining interest among younger generations. The limited use of written and digital documentation also creates a risk that valuable knowledge may disappear as older knowledge holders pass away. Women should therefore not be viewed merely as recipients of traditional knowledge but as knowledge holders, innovators and active agents in its preservation and adaptation. Their knowledge can contribute to sustainable family management and the preservation of Manipuri cultural identity.

The study recommends systematic documentation of women's traditional knowledge, intergenerational learning programmes, community-based knowledge centres, inclusion of relevant indigenous knowledge in educational curricula, digital preservation initiatives and greater recognition of women's contribution to cultural heritage. Government institutions, educational institutions, community organizations and women's groups should work together to create mechanisms for preserving and promoting this knowledge. Ultimately, the preservation of traditional knowledge in Manipur requires a participatory and gender-sensitive approach in which women are given recognition, decision-making opportunities and institutional support. Strengthening women's role as custodians of traditional knowledge can simultaneously promote family welfare, cultural continuity, community resilience and sustainable development in Manipur.

7. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends adopting a comprehensive approach to preserve and promote the traditional knowledge (TK) possessed by women in Manipur. Traditional practices related to family management, healthcare, nutrition, agriculture, weaving, handicrafts, and environmental conservation should be systematically documented through collaboration between communities, government agencies, and academic institutions. Indigenous knowledge should also be integrated into school and college curricula, while families and communities should encourage intergenerational knowledge transfer through cultural activities and mentorship.

Women should be recognized and empowered as the primary custodians of traditional knowledge through leadership opportunities, capacity-building, and supportive policies. Traditional health practices should be scientifically documented and protected, while sustainable livelihood programmes based on indigenous skills such as weaving, handicrafts, organic farming, and medicinal plant cultivation should be promoted to enhance household income.

The study further recommends legal protection of traditional knowledge through intellectual property rights and community ownership, greater involvement of women in biodiversity conservation and natural resource management, and increased government support through financial assistance, training, and recognition programmes. Universities and research institutions should encourage interdisciplinary research and digital documentation of indigenous knowledge, while women knowledge holders should actively participate in local governance and policy formulation.

Overall, preserving the traditional knowledge of women in Manipur requires coordinated efforts from families, communities, educational institutions, researchers, and policymakers. Strengthening documentation, intergenerational transmission, women's empowerment, and policy integration will help safeguard cultural heritage while contributing to sustainable family welfare, community development, and environmental sustainability.

8. CONCLUSION

Women play a central role in preserving, practicing, and transmitting traditional knowledge within families and communities in Manipur. Their knowledge encompasses healthcare, nutrition, agriculture, food preservation, childcare, environmental conservation, resource management, and cultural traditions, contributing significantly to family well-being and sustainable livelihoods.

The study finds that traditional knowledge remains highly relevant for family management, supporting health, household economy, food security, and resilience by combining indigenous wisdom with modern practices. This knowledge is mainly passed down informally through mothers and grandmothers via observation, participation, storytelling, rituals, and daily household activities.



However, the transmission of traditional knowledge is increasingly threatened by urbanization, modernization, migration, changing lifestyles, formal education, and reduced interest among younger generations. Women also face challenges such as inadequate documentation, limited institutional support, reduced access to natural resources, and changing family structures.

Despite these challenges, women continue to adapt and preserve traditional practices, which promote biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource use, healthy nutrition, and community cooperation. The study concludes that recognizing, documenting, and supporting women's traditional knowledge through policies, education, and intergenerational knowledge-sharing is essential for preserving Manipur's cultural heritage, strengthening family welfare, and promoting sustainable community development.

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