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**A Holistic Study on Demographic, Sociocultural and Healthcare Seeking Pattern of Irular Community at Pichavaram, Cuddalore District, Tamilnadu**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** The tribal communities remain at the lowest stratum of society – Though accorded special status under Indian Constitution their health remains unsatisfactory due to isolation, illiteracy and the environment in which they live. This study was conducted to present a holistic view of the socioeconomic status, living conditions, general customs, beliefs and practices and health seeking behaviour of the Irular community, at Pichavaram in Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu. **Methods:** A - Mixed method study was performed using Focus Group Discussion, in-depth interviews, participatory observations (triangulation of methods) and a pre- tested semi structured questionnaire among the people of Irular community aged 13 to 70 years residing at Kalaignarnagar and Grid colony, Killai, Pichavaram during the month of October 2020. **Results:** The study was done among 250 participants with the mean age of 30.66±12.48. 11.6% of them have acquired education upto high school level, 7% upto higher secondary and 2.2% upto degree level. 55.6% of the families use LPG for cooking, 69.1% boil water for drinking. 25.2% practice open air defecation. Association between menstrual hygiene and literacy of female participants is statistically significant. 55.6% utilize Government Hospital and 44.4% utilize Primary Health Centre services for healthcare. **Conclusion:** Our results identified a notable transition in the sociocultural patterns and a progress in the economic status of these Irulars due to fishing profession, self-help groups, literacy among younger generation and efforts of a private foundation. There is improved awareness related to menstrual hygiene and Maternal and child health practices. But the elder generation requires further motivation for increased health seeking behaviour.

**Key word:** Irular, Socioeconomic status, cultural beliefs, health seeking behaviour

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