

CULTURAL PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF THE KUMAON DIVISION: A COMPREHENSIVE EXPLORATION

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ABSTRACT

Background: The Kumaoni culture, snuggled within the peaceful embrace of the Himalayan expanse in Uttarakhand, India, epitomises an exquisite junction of traditions, folklore, artistry, customs and rituals. This research paper seeks to explore the Kumaoni cultural heritage, demographics, linguistic, social and artistic dimensions. The grandeur of Kumaoni culture illuminates the community's sacrosanct bond with nature and spirituality. The research aimed to achieve several objectives. Firstly, investigating factors contributing to the gradual extinction of Kumaoni cultural practices. Secondly, exploring reasons behind migration from Kumaon villages and its effects on traditions. Thirdly, analyzing the decline of the Kumaoni language and its impact on cultural identity. Fourthly, examining folk beliefs and superstitions in Kumaon. **Method:** Not limiting the review process to literature review, the study underwent digital and social media analysis where social media accounts of Instagram influencers promoting Kumaoni culture were explored and websites of resorts, hotels and restaurants in Kumaon were examined to understand the integration of cultural elements in tourism and hospitality. **Results:** The findings of this research help in comprehending the change in cultural identities among the migrant communities. The research also provides valuable suggestions to the government and organizations who are working towards the direction of cultural preservation. **Discussion:** The findings derived from the language graph of the study march with that of the UNESCO's classification of Kumaoni as an endangered language, which showcases how migration, modernization and this changing work culture due to technological advancements have led to cultural decline as a whole including linguistic decline. **Conclusion:** This study provides a comprehensive lens on the transformation of Kumaoni cultural identity and offers practical insights for stakeholders invested in preserving the region's intangible heritage in the face of rapid social and economic change.

Keywords: Kumaon; Kumaoni culture; Endangered language; Aipan; Folk beliefs

INTRODUCTION

Understanding Kumaon Division: An Overview

The picturesque Kumaon known for its cultural inheritance, splendid beauty and rituals is stretched across Tibet (China) in the north, Nepal in the east, Uttar Pradesh in the south and the Garhwali region in the west. It has derived its name from the word “kurmanchal” which means the land of “kurmavata” which is the tortoise incarnation of lord Vishnu ([Sharma & Karush, 2017](#)). Himalayas exemplify one of the most fragile mountains of the world, Kumaon being a part of it. Diving into its physiographic and demographic aspects, its mighty Himalayan Tract, designated by snow-capped peaks, luxuriant valleys and unblemished glaciers, is dominated by peaks like Nanda Devi and Panchachuli. Terai Region which is a submontane strip is a fertile plain with lush forests, rivers and agricultural land. Then the Bhabar Region which is another submontane zone that features porous gravelly soil acting as a natural filter for water preventing flooding in the plains. Kumaon division of Uttarakhand has many wild edible fruits and plants also which enjoy traditional, spiritual and medicinal benefits ([Rao, 2021](#)). According to [Kaira, Joshi & Pant \(2023\)](#) Kumaon Himalaya is geologically very sensitive and prone to “man induced disaster” events. The collage of its demography depicts its total population of 4,228,998. The native language being Kumaoni is distinguished into 4 major segments and 12 dialectal partitions. It is home to several ethnic groups including Kumaoni, Bhotiya, Tharu (Bhoksa), Shaukas and Rungs. Kumaon has 6 districts Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, Nainital, Pithoragarh, and Udham Singh Nagar under it where Nainital is serving as the administrative centre and hosts the Uttarakhand High court. It is also adorned with other hill towns such as Ranikhet, Munsiyari etc. It has a rich historical legacy, ruled by Hindu dynasties such as the Katyuris and the Chands. After reclaiming it from the Gorkhas the British established the Kumaon division in 1816. Winding up with the overview, kumaons psychography and demography give a very magnificent view of the Kumaon hills which will never leave a chance to infatuate its residents and the travellers.

Cultural Practices in Kumaon

This demography and geography have a huge influence in its cultural practices. Kumaoni culture is a combination of charismatic traditions, harmonious tunes, ritualistic folk art and the most comforting food that portrays the beauty of Himalayas. Kumaoni people jollify in a rich calendar of festival. And these festivals are tied to the agrarian cycles and the changing seasons. Some festivals are common like Baithaki Holi of Kumaon and Diwali but some unique kumaoni festivals are Ghughutiya, ghee sankrant, phooldei, harela, khaturwa, satu aathu, Bhittauli etc. Kumaon’s agricultural practice and pastoral lifestyle breeds the festival of Harela which heralds monsoon, personifying abundance by cultivating seeds and venerating Lord Shiva and Parvati. The time-honoured Bhittauli tradition is where the parents lavish their daughters with pecuniary gifts and food items during the Chaitra month, epitomising eternal blessings and affection as the brother travels to the home of her wedded sister with gifts including some dishes ([Singh, 2023](#)). Kumaoni dance forms ingrained with grace such as the martial Choliya. Kumaoni palette of folk songs is very colorful, having dance songs like the Jhoda, Chapeli, Chachari and Dushka celebrating unity and tradition, then some agricultural songs like the Hukra Baul, Riturain etc that represents the kumaonis love for nature. Adding to this palette, there are ballad songs which

celebrates pure love and devotion namely Bhars, Ramaul, Mallushahi (Singh, 2018). Some sad songs like Nyoli are also sung. According to Chauhan & Panwar (2002) a Nyoli's uniqueness presents a complete range of emotions in just two lines, expressing a deep sense of grief of a newly married woman after being separated from her loved one's as she moves to her in-laws. Some ritualistic folk songs are for celebrating the golden moments which are the Shakunakharas, sung by women these songs mark the commencement of major life sanskaras like the child birth, naming ceremony, Janu/ thread ceremony and marriage (Banerjee & Pathak, 2024). Kumaoni folk art akin to rangoli known as "Aipan", given birth by Geru (red soil) and Biswar (rice paste) out of which intricate patterns are painstakingly created. There are three types of Aipan namely Siddhu, Davia, Loukika. In Kumaoni attire the resplendent Pichori, a shawl, adorned in saffron and yellow hues, draped elegantly by married women for auspicious occasions. Men wear dhoti, kurta and a black, boat-shaped topi / cap, embodying Kumaon's sartorial elegance. Kumaoni cuisine, a culinary ode to simplicity which is made with locally sourced plants having medicinal properties and are used to cure ailments (Acharya Balkrishna et al., 2024). Maddua flour is one of the food items with high medicinal properties as it has huge amount of calcium, potassium etc. and a magic wand for a diabetic person (Rautela & Joshi, 2022). The very famous Bal mithai and other dishes such as Bhatt ki chudkani, kumaoni raita, Aloo Ke Gutke etc are some of the mouthwatering dishes of Kumaon which are deeply rooted with the natural environment and availability of seasonal vegetables (Negi & HOD, 2024). According to Juyal & Priyadarshini (2022) kumaoni cuisine was of Saatvik/ pure nature and there was a huge no of drinks related to milk products.

Folk Beliefs and Superstitions

The most alluring cultural mosaic of Kumaon is not only limited to, rituals, artistry, cuisine etc but also some folk beliefs and superstitions that play an indispensable role in this tradition. For instance, a married hindu women traditionally adorns charayu/mangalsutra around her neck emblematic of good luck but it is considered inauspicious once broken. Kumaonis are very particular when it comes to their rituals, traditions and some uncompromising guidelines related to travel or daily routine. Sitting while placing one hand on your head is considered to be inauspicious, it is said that it rains on the day of marriage of a person who licks a ladle or eats in a pan. For any auspicious work days such as Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Friday are considered worthy whereas on other days are acceptable for expressing condolences. Additionally, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, prohibitions are made for cutting hair or nails. Girls aren't allowed to play counc- shell /shankh. Girls are prohibited to applying turmeric on body before marriage, it is only on the day of marriage that they do this. Amongst all these superstitions, Jaagar which is not a mere ritual but a strong faith or belief of kumaonis is performed due to various reasons like health, divine justice, protection etc (Awasthi, 2018).

Migration Patterns and Traditions

The definition of migration in the most uncomplicated words would be "*movement of people from one place to another*" (Prateek, 2017). The hills and the mountains are being the victims of migration. The rationale behind this exodus from Kumaon hills points towards the harshness of mountain life that the young blood of the region chases for dreams of urban prosperity as a result the community, language, dialect, rituals etc all begin to fade. The reason behind migration is

deeply – seated in its socio – economic factors. Unemployment being the premier ground of discussion as the Kumaon hills lack suitable employment opportunity due to lack of industrial development in the rugged mountains. Poor Health and Educational facilities, absence of electricity and unavailability of clean drinking water serves to be the noteworthy reasons of migration ([Chandra et al., 2018](#)). As per the population census (2001) nearly, three fourth of Uttarakhand population lives in its rural areas and migration of all hill districts had been recorded except few. More than 1000 villages in Uttarakhand have fallen into abandonment as hardly anyone lives in these villages. Derived from a survey which was sponsored by the National Institute of Rural Development found that 90% of the migrants from the two districts Pauri Garhwal and Almora are long term migrants ([Khan et al., 2016](#)). The Government must take actions to generate employment in the hills and there could be many ways. One of the ways would be the promotion of tourism most importantly gastronomic tourism which not only help in the preservation kumaoni cuisine or some forgotten recipes of Kumaon but also generate employment opportunity ([Bhatt, 2023](#)). According to [Hasija et al., \(2022\)](#) the young blood moves to bigger cities for employment, as a result of which the villagers survive on money order economy and agricultural produce with women bearing all the burden.

Language Decline and Identity

After migrating from Kumaon hills these people adopt a dominant language for social and economic growth which leads to a decline in native language. The language of this colourful land of Kumaon belongs to the Indo-Aryan group partitioned into 4 distinguished segments that are Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern each manifesting 12 dialectal nuances like the Askoti dialect which comes under the umbrella of eastern division and has a huge Nepali influence. Being an indo- Aryan language kumaoni derives its vocabulary from Sanskrit ([Rawat et al., 2022](#)). Many grounds lead to the decline of kumaoni language. Migration serves to be the premier element in the decline of the language as the youth trails towards finding employment and a good quality of life. This exodus further gives birth to many rationales like Influence of Other Culture as the community dissolves into the vast plains and the youth opts for mainstream languages for education, work and socialising as not many people understand the language and it points to another reason which is Barriers of Language. Therefore, the youth being enamoured and enchanted by the culture of the plains, marry the individual of other culture leading to the erosion of the language. Endorsing the kumaoni language, government should make it compulsory in school. Language can protect itself naturally provided that it does not meet with external hinderances and threats ([Sahu, 2023](#)). Language is the very body of any culture and it needs to be preserved otherwise it erodes the cultural identity. And kumaoni being a language having a rich literary legacy.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

1. To investigate factors contributing to the gradual extinction of kumaoni cultural practices.
2. To explore reasons behind migration from Kumaon villages and its effects on traditions.
3. To analyze the decline of the Kumaoni language and its impact on cultural identity.
4. To examine enduring folk beliefs and superstitions in Kumaon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Singh, 2023) In this research the author has encapsulated the classical traditions of Kumaon and its evolution overtime. The title of the research pinpoints the content of the study in a very justified manner. The researcher has clearly mentioned all the Kumaoni traditions, how they were practiced in earlier times and what is the face of these Kumaoni traditions in the modern era. (Todiwan & Dhar, 2021) The central idea of this research paper is Kumaoni cuisine. The researcher explains that Kumaoni local cuisine has been passed on through generations but this cuisine is not properly recorded or documented so this research is particularly focused on documentation of Kumaoni cuisine. Special effort has been made to document local dishes as well as the key ingredients of Kumaoni cuisine which are on the verge of extinction.

(Shah, 2014) The central idea of this research paper is ethnobiology. The researcher has very beautifully explained how birds, plants and animals become a part of human culture. The researcher makes special effort by elucidating 5 birds, animals and 14 plants, which are coupled with the Kumaoni culture. The researcher has depicted how apart from cuisine and other customs the plants, animals and birds have influenced the life of Kumaoni people such that these have been used in phrases, sayings, folk stories, songs and riddles. (Shah, 2007) This study talks about the significance of Taro in Kumaon. The study focuses on the different names of taro in different languages, the use of taro in Kumaoni cuisine, proverbs and sayings. And the research is concluded by presenting some suggestions for future work on the species.

(Rai, 2022) This research paper examines how kumaoni culture is manifested and revitalized on social media, particularly facebook. The author has worked on many aspects of kumaoni culture and language to highlight the fact that social media platforms have a mighty role to play in cultural continuity, community building etc. (Sharma & Karush, 2017) This study is concerned with finding out the perception of tourists on Kumaoni cuisine who are visiting various tourist sites in Kumaon. This study also makes an analysis on participation of the government and the local people in promoting local cuisine of Kumaon. The findings of the research also yield various measures which can be practiced to preserve Kumaoni cuisine. (Acharya Balkrishna *et al.*, 2024) This research is focused on the traditional food systems of Kumaon, how plant species used for preparing delicious recipes also have medicinal significance and is used to treat many ailments as well. (Awasthi, 2018). The study explores the jaagar tradition of Uttarakhand with its literal meaning jaaga which means “to awaken”. The author brings to light its cultural, ritualistic and spiritual roles and the myriad reasons for why it is performed. (Chandra *et al.*, 2018) This study shows migration patterns in Kumaon and social economic factors that contribute to this exodus. The author mentions that the chief reason behind the migration from Kumaon hills is UNEMPLOYMENT. And the study suggests many reasons to eradicate this problem for instance generating more employment opportunities with regard to diversified farming, IT centres, agro-tourism etc. Along with these infrastructural facilities such as education, health, markets, clean drinking water, electricity etc. should be promoted in order to retain the rural youth in Kumaon hills.

(Mamta & Mittal, 2021) The study resolves around kumaoni language that is categorized as “endangered” by UNESCO. This study gives an insightful view of the jeopardized “Kumaoni language” where the researcher initially gives the introduction of the language throwing light on

the various Kumaoni literature available further the researcher also tells that the Kumaoni language is divided into 4 groups 12 dialects mentioning the reasons of the endangered status of Kumaoni language the researcher finally concludes the research by providing measures for the upliftment of Kumaoni language.

METHODOLOGY

This study on kumaoni cultural fostered a mixed-method approach which provided a comprehensive analysis by combining qualitative and quantitative aspects as a result of which the cultural transition, migration patterns, language decline could be evaluated. The literature review focused on around 50 research papers which focused not only on the kumaoni culture, rituals, traditions, cuisine, ornaments, attire and the aipan art but also it focused on reviewing existing literature on ethnobiology, demography and articles addressing the migration patterns and linguistic decline. It involved exploring content of instagram influencers promoting kumaoni culture and also examining websites of hotels, resorts, restaurants in Kumaon to understand the integration of cultural elements in tourism and hospitality. It also involved data collection through surveys and interviews which involved 51 participants.

RESULTS

Data Analysis and Interpretation

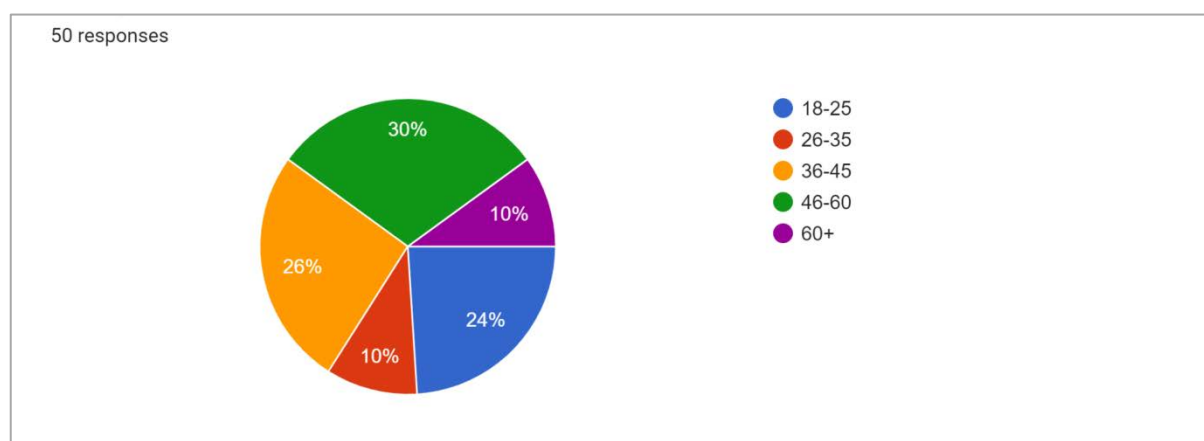


Figure 1 : AGE

Age demographics help in analysing the data more precisely. This cultural study has a vivid sample population, with respondents from various age groups instead of being limited to a specific one. The graph shows that majority of 30% hails from the age group of 46-60 and 10% minority of people aged between 26-35 and who are 60+. This means that middle-aged group people have a huge influence in participation and preservation of culture. The reason behind participation of adults as compared to mid-aged groups are several economic factors, search for employment opportunity as the growth of AI and technology has increased competition level and the want to afford all the luxuries of life.

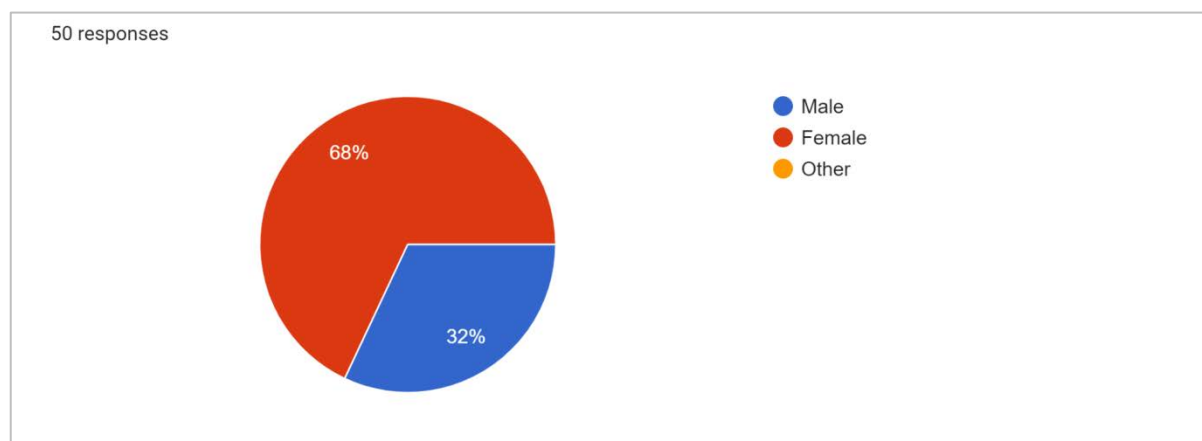


Figure 2: GENDER

The graph clearly shows that the sample is lopsided towards female respondents. Out of 50 respondents 68% of majority is with female, 32% are male and 0% identify as other. According to the census of 2011, the population of Uttarakhand was 10,086,292. Out of which males constituted to 5,137,773 and females were 4,948,519. The results clearly show that female respondents constitute the majority. The reason is simple that women are the custodians of culture its customs and rituals. They pass on these traditions to coming generation. In Kumaon the women have taken care of these customs, for instance, the ritualistic folk art of Kumaon which is aipan is made by women. On the festival of phooldei little girls who are of tender age worship the doorstep commonly known as *dheli*.

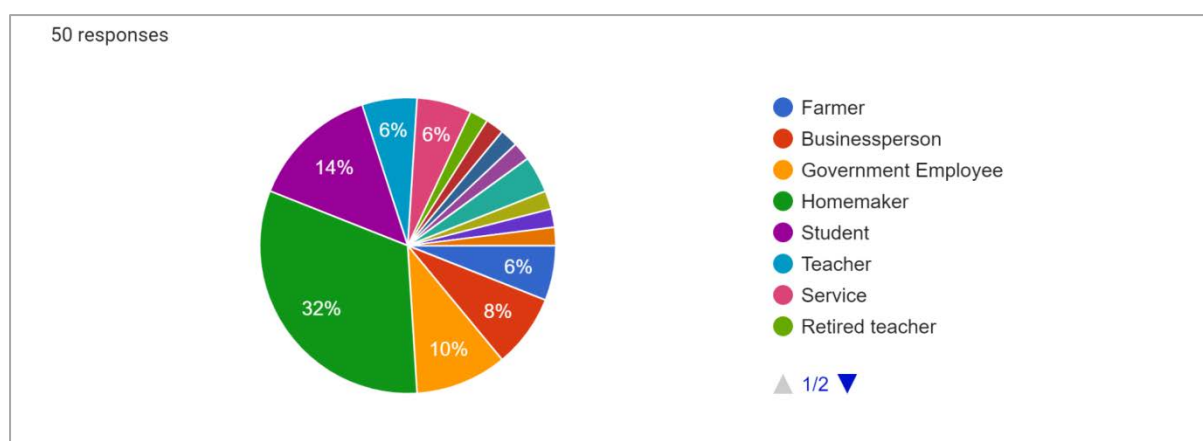


Figure 3: OCCUPATION

The graph conveys that homemakers form the largest occupational group which is 32% while farmers, teachers and people in service sector each constitute 6% of the respondents. The significance of occupation in cultural research is immense. It provides insights into how work influences cultural identity, language, rituals, values and social setup. Occupation lays out a perception that there is a give and take relationship between these socio-cultural factors. Like work influences class, class influences gender, gender influences cultural change. With occupation the cultural values and certain rituals also evolve.

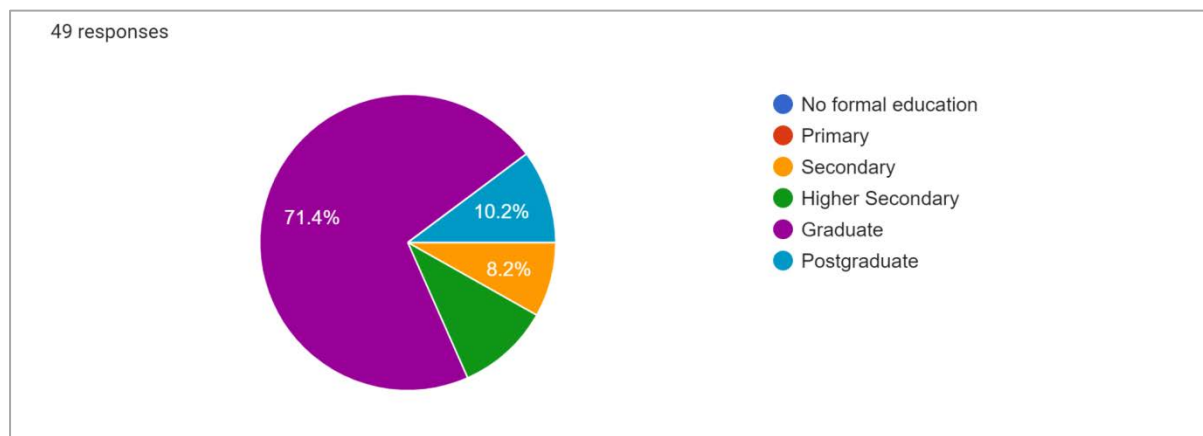


Figure 4: EDUCATION LEVEL

The graph reveals the educational level of the respondents where majority is enjoyed by people who are graduates and their percentage accounts to be 71.4% followed by 10.2% people who are postgraduates, 8.2% as secondary etc. The purpose of knowing the educational level of the population is that it provides us with many insights that help us to deeply analyse and interpret the cultural values, rituals, traditions etc. It is also evident that social group or culture with lower or no education level involve in continuing or caretaking such practices, rituals, norms, beliefs that are regarded as harmful in broader societal aspects/dimensions or are outdated. For instance, in ancient times certain practices that were proudly followed but were cruel in nature like sati pratha, child marriage etc. Educated people are generally more resistant to traditional practices due to their critical thinking and exposure to modern values.

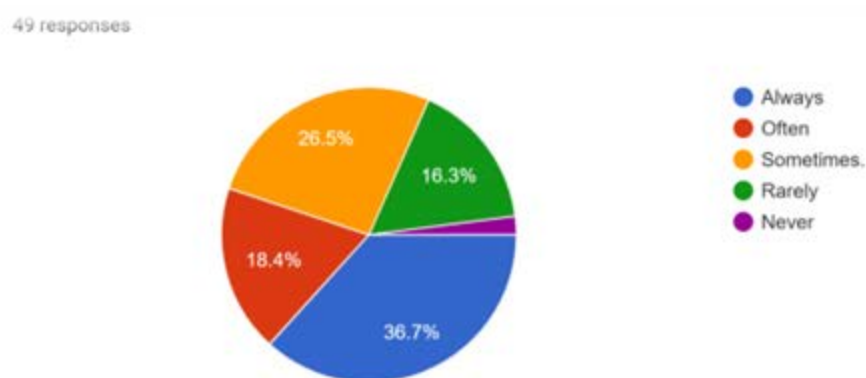


Figure 5: Frequency of Participation in Traditional Kumaoni Festivals

The graph represents the participation of people in traditional kumaoni festivals and the majority is with 36.7% who claim that they always participate and 16.3% who rarely participate and a very small proportion of those who never participate. We can see that kumaoni people are very particular about their culture. Cultural participation of people reveals a lot about their social

identity, attachment to roots, inclination towards culture and rituals and sense of belonging to a social group. Migration serves to be the reason for people who rarely participate.

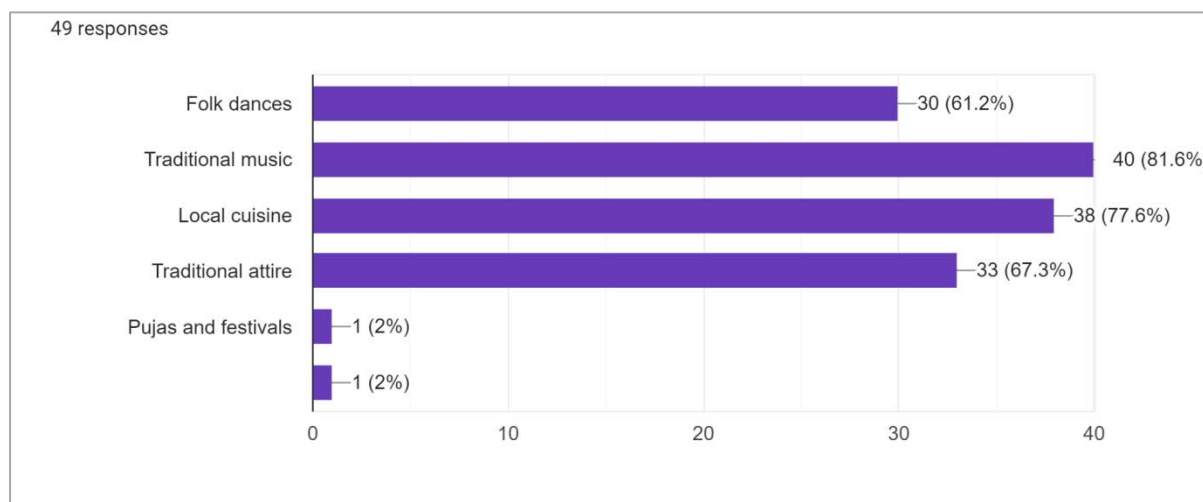


Figure 6: Traditional Kumaoni Practices Followed by Participants

This is evident from the graph that a majority of people like to follow traditional music which is 81.6% ,77.6% shows inclination towards traditional local cuisine, 67.3% traditional attire, 61.2% are inclined towards folk dances and rest follow pujas and festivals etc. Although there are many other traditions that are of huge importance to the community and people follow it like making the traditional Aipan art. The analysis of this graphical representation conveys the fact that cultural legacy and preservation of practices like music, cuisine and attire retain popularity which may be easy for people to incorporate in their daily lives. Secondly, the decline in ritual practices which means the low participation.

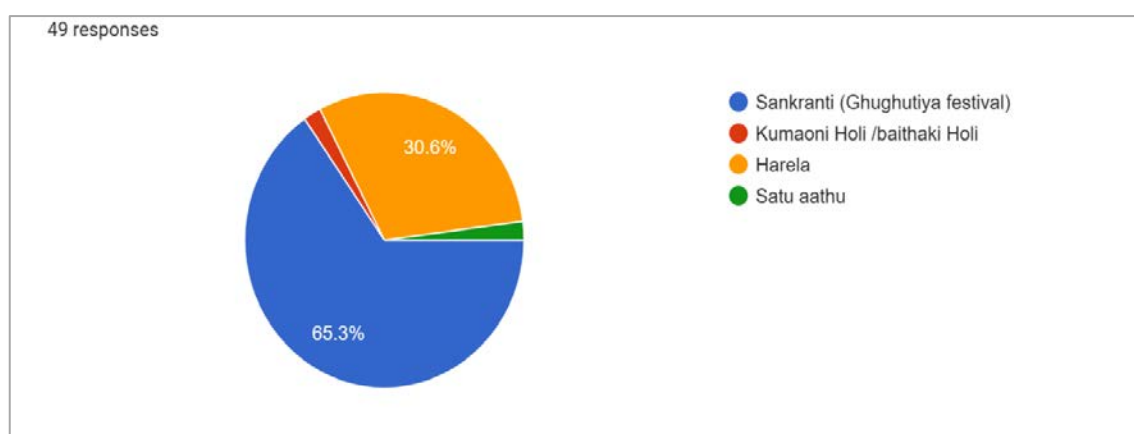


Figure 7: Most Valued Kumaoni Tradition That Holds Irreplaceable Significance in the Community

The graph represents that which kumaoni festival is of huge importance to the community and cannot be neglected in any way and it reveals that 65.3% Sankranti (ghughutiya festival), 30.6%

harela and very small proportions is divided amongst the others. So, it can be concluded that majority of people celebrate ghugutiya tyohar/ festival.

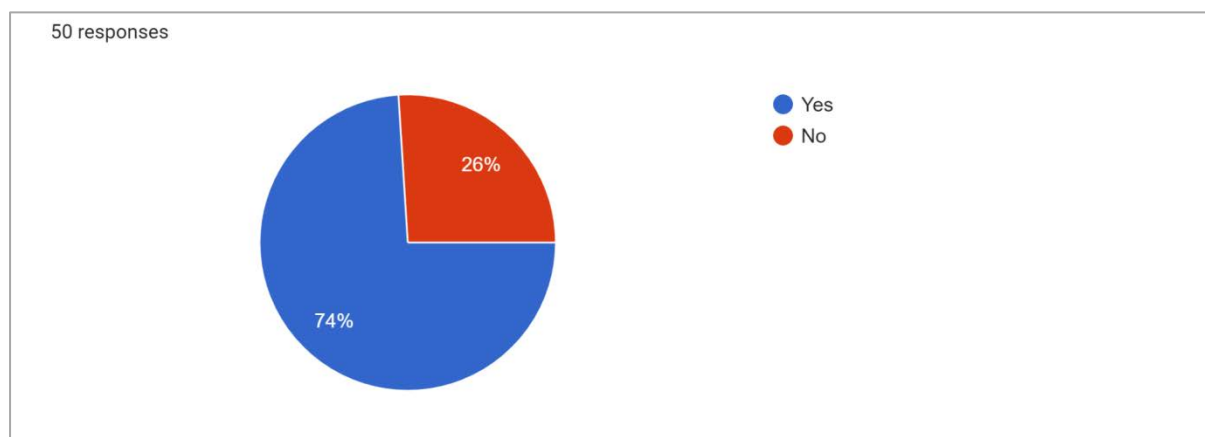


Figure 8: Migration of Individuals or Families from Kumaon Hills to Other Regions

The graph helps us in understanding the number of populations migrated from Kumaon hills. And the survey reveals that a majority of 74% have replied with yes which means they have migrated while 26% have not migrated and still live in the village.

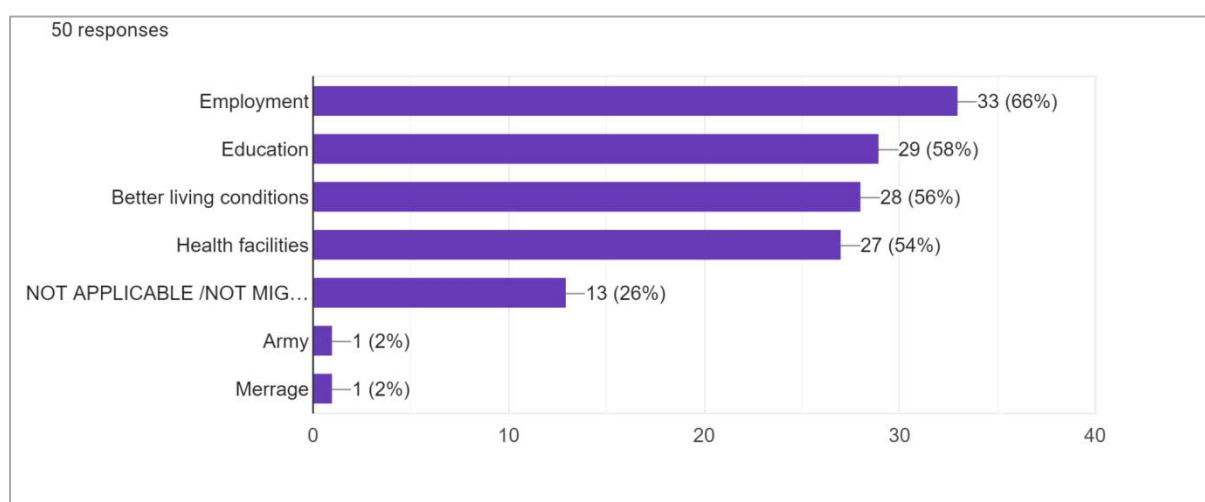


Figure 9(A): Primary Reasons for Migration Among Respondents

The graph represents all the primary reasons for migration and a majority of 66% people migrated due to employment, 29% education, 28% better living conditions, 27% health facilities and the rest had other reasons. It can be concluded that the most important reason for migration are better employment opportunities, better living conditions, education facilities and health facilities. Very small percentage of women have migrated because of marriage which would mean that many have been married to a person who lives in urban areas and not in Kumaon hills.

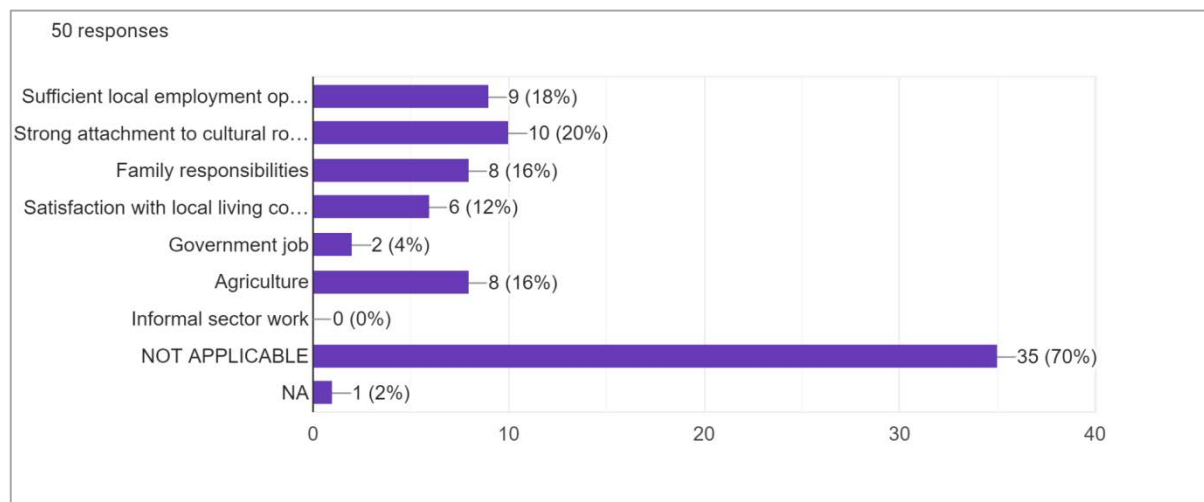


Figure 9(B): Primary Reasons for Not Migrating Among Non-Migrant Respondents

Although, still there is a population of people who have not migrated from Kumaon hills and reside there. This graph represents the primary reason for not migrating from Kumaon hills and a majority of 20% is with people who claim that they had strong attachment to cultural roots, 18% people believe that they have sufficient local employment opportunities, a uniformity of 16% can be seen between people who claim they have family responsibility or are involved in agriculture, 12% believe they are satisfied with local living conditions and 4% individuals are in government jobs.

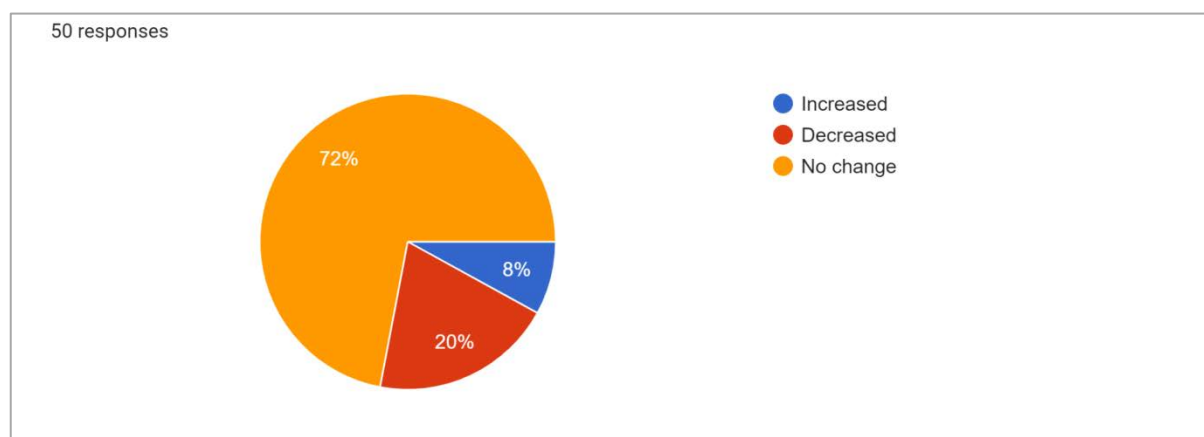


Figure 10: Impact of Migration on Participation in Traditional Practices

This graph is visually representing the fact that whether or not migration has influenced the participation of people in traditional kumaoni practices. Majority of people which is 72% say no change, 20% say decreased participation while 8% say increased. People who have migrated and their participation has increased (8%) then it would be because they have huge inclination towards their culture, impact of social media or a huge amount of interest in cultural practices. People claiming no change (72%) is because it is seen that in urban areas many people of different social groups come together and form association/ groups or locally named as mandali or Sabha for instance the Garhwal Sabha, Gorkha samiti (group of Gorkhas), or Kumaon mandali

where they come together and celebrate their festivals which are unique to their culture. So, the reason why some people have replied with “no change” or “increased” it would be because of the fact that they might be a part of these small groups or mandalis. The other 20% who claim that their participation has decreased is because of their less interest or inclination towards their culture, modernization, work pressure, etc.

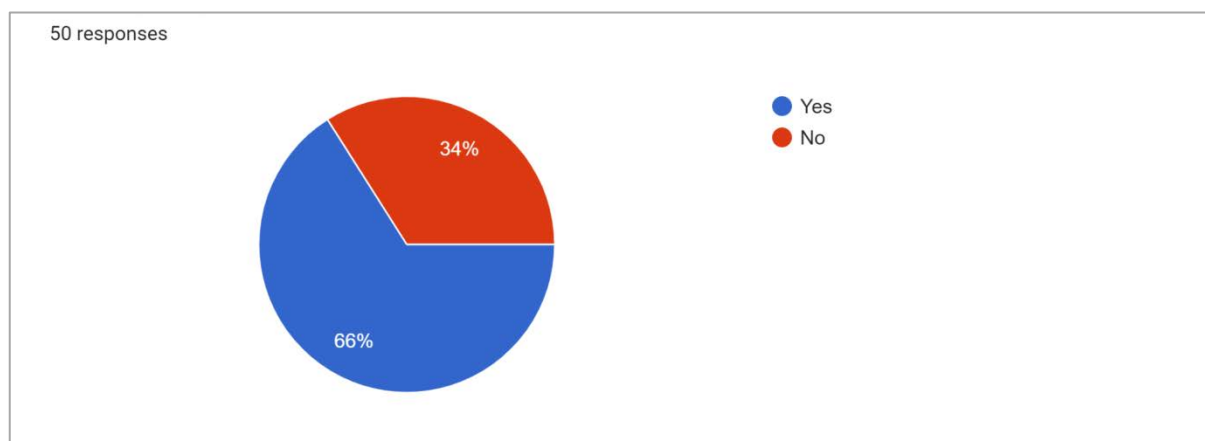


Figure 11: Usage of Kumaoni Language in Household Settings

The graph reveals that 66% people speak kumaoni and 34% don't. Which means that majority of people speak kumaoni. Although in real life variations exists as many individuals speak kumaoni only with elders as they don't understand any other language well. Some speak very less because they are not fluent enough.

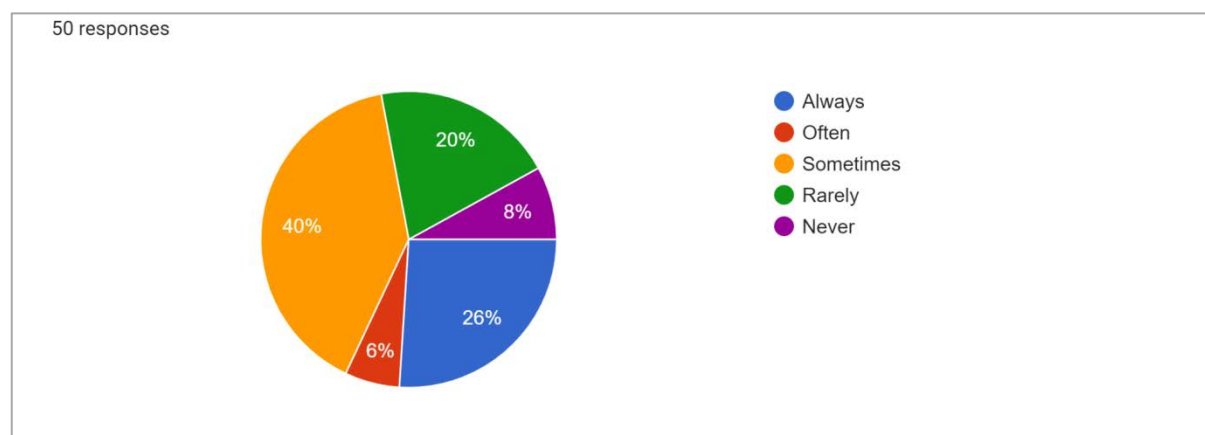


Figure 12: Frequency of Kumaoni Language Use in Daily Life

Here the graph reveals the insights into how often do people use the kumaoni language in daily life. Interestingly, 40% people say that they use it sometimes, 26% say always, 20% rarely, 8% never, 6% often. This depicts the variations amongst the kumaoni speakers. The reason why majority of people say that they speak the language sometimes is because majority of respondents had migrated and it is evident that not everyone will understand the language so people tend to use the language which is understood by all. While people who say they never speak might be

those who are either not in contact with kumaoni speaking people, lack of fluency or simply they don't know the language. In order to reverse this trend and to make the survival of the ongoing decline of the kumaoni language efforts should be made to encourage use of language especially with the younger generation.

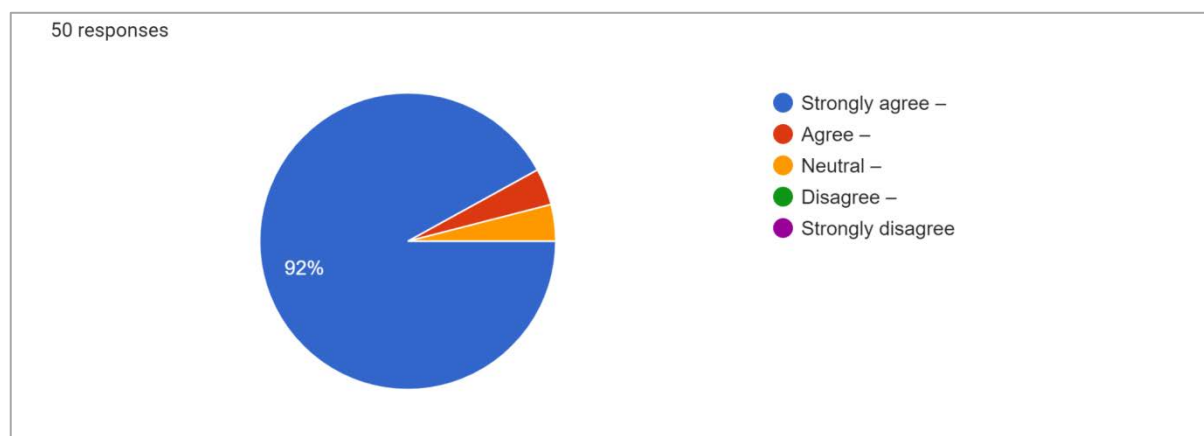


Figure 13: Importance of the Kumaoni Language for Cultural Identity

The graph represents that how many people believe that kumaoni language is important for cultural identity and it is revealed that 92% people claim that they strongly agree with this. While some very small proportion of people say that they are neutral or just simply agree. So, we arrive at a conclusion that language holds immense importance to any community.

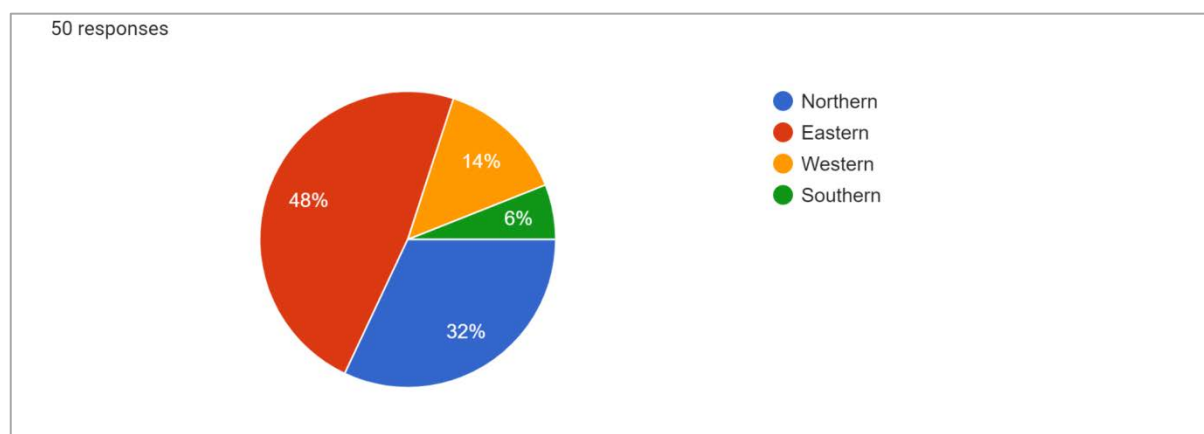


Figure 14: Language Group Affiliation of the Kuamoni Language Speakers

The native language being Kumaoni is distinguished into 4 major segments namely northern, eastern, western, southern and 12 dialectal divisions. And this graphical representation depicts that 48% people are from eastern division, 32% are northern, 14% western and the remaining 6% are southern. Each of these represents unique dialectal nuances and regional eccentricity.

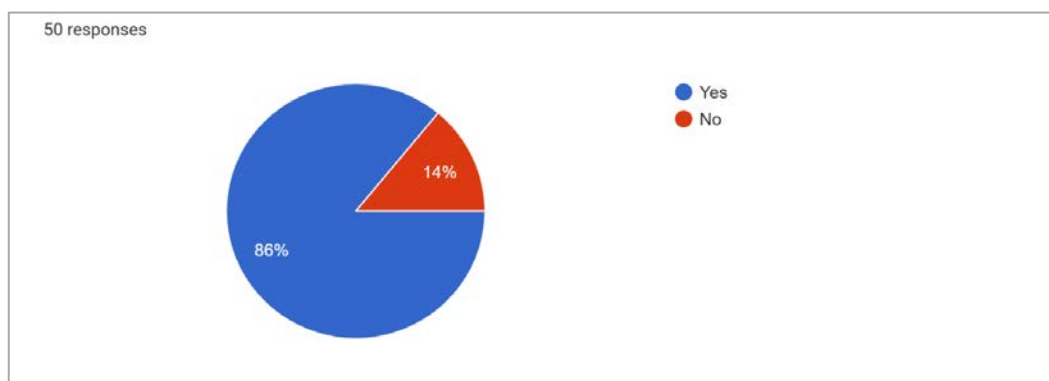


Figure 15: Belief in Traditional Kuamoni Folk Beliefs and Superstitions

There is an existence of many kumaoni folk beliefs and superstitions and out of 50 respondents majority is of 86% people who replied with yes marking their firm believe in such folk beliefs and superstitions, family upbringing and their strong attachment to such kind of societal norms while 14% people said no which portrays their modernist and sceptical view due to their exposure to diverse perspectives and new culture, huge influence of education or a busy lifestyle and work pressure that never allowed them to follow such beliefs.

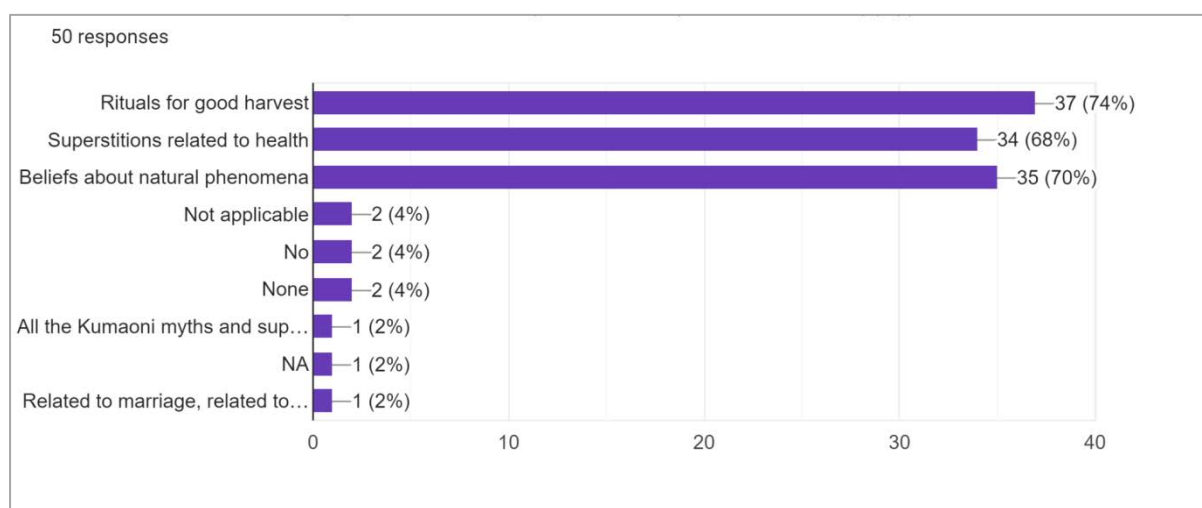


Figure 16: Folk Beliefs Followed by Respondents

This graph shows that majority of 74% follow or believe in myths relating to rituals for good harvest followed by 70% people who believe in superstitions related to natural phenomena followed by 68% who believe in superstition related to health and some small proportion of people who believe in myths related to marriage, work and days which are auspicious or not etc.

Major Findings

This study on kumaoni culture provided a very profound view of its traditional practices. It had many bifurcations as it not only delves into various practices, rituals, customs, festivals, cuisine, attire, etc of this culture but also the myriad challenges that menace their preservation in the current milieu. There were several questions that were precisely designed and presented in order to unveil that to what depths the kumaonis have knowledge and understanding about their

culture. It has come to light that most of the respondents express their desire to shield their culture, to safeguard their language which is nothing more than a fading melody and to protect empty homes that tells the story of people who have migrated. Poor living conditions, no employment opportunities leading to weak economic conditions, lack of quality education, no comforts or luxuries of life lead to migration of Kumaon hills. The research also focuses on superstitions and certain beliefs that do not march with the modern trends but are still prevalent in the community.

DISCUSSION

This research puts forward a comprehensive exploration of kumaons cultural heritage, demographics, cultural practices, folk beliefs and superstitions, migration patterns and traditions and the linguistic decline. It reveals the cultural mosaic of Kumaon that represents festivals such as Harela, Ghughutiya, Phooldei and its traditional art forms like Aipan that serves to be the most eternal and indispensable part of it. Although, kumaonis who are born in cities may not be familiar with it as a result of which the beloved aipan art of Kumaon is eroding ([Virmani & Bansal, 2018](#)). Ghuhutiya festival which is very significant to the kumaonis is named after the bird ghughuti or the mountain dove. Association of these plants and animals with the culture is known as the Ethnobiology ([Shah, 2014](#)). However, the study also unveils all the external factors such as modernisation, migration, technological advancements and this sudden bloom of online shopping that are not only responsible for eroding these time-honoured traditions and rituals uninterruptedly but also bringing a transitional change in culture practices such as in earlier times bhिताली was given by visiting the sisters residence who was married but now the bhिताली in form of cash is given online and sometimes the cloths or favourite items are also purchased online and delivered to her. The kumaoni cuisine is so simple that it can be made or tried by anyone easily at home. It includes use of rock salt instead of common salt ([Todiwan & Dhar, 2021](#)). Additionally, out the many important food items Taro root or (in kumaoni) Pinalu is also a very important crop ([Shah, 2007](#)). The hills of Kumaon are being victims of migration and the predominant reasons revealed for migration is unemployment, quest for improved living conditions, better health & education facilities.

In a more extensive view of this research a very innate bond between culture and its demography is revealed. The results and the findings of the research go hand in hand with the global migration patterns. The findings derived from language use graph of the study marches with that of the UNESCO's classification of kumaoni as an endangered language which showcases how migration, modernization and this changing work culture due to technological advancements have led to cultural decline as a whole including linguistic decline.

The most surprising part of the study is where the findings revealed the stick-to-it-iveness or persistence of folk beliefs or superstitions even among those who are educated. The study reveals that approximately 86% of respondents adhere to these practices as a result of which it flouts to the expectations that modern education and urban exposure would end these beliefs. Therefore, it reflects the fact that these rituals and cultural attachments are deeply- rooted in defiance of external influences and exposure.

Further, the study personifies a yin and yang perspective of the culture. Nothing is pure white and both good and bad exist. In this research the yin or its strength is that it provides a very qualitative insights of this culture but its yang or its weakness and limitations cannot be overlooked. Therefore, its limitations are that it had a small sample, dominated by women respondents which may limit the applicability of the results yielded. Adding to that the study's geographical focus is glued to some select or specific districts and it is not wide as it limits the cultural study.

The potential follow-up research studies could fossick into the role of social media in conserving the culture and traditions amongst the kumoni diaspora, technological advancements cannot be completely blamed for this decline because social media platforms like instagram and facebook can be used as a potent tool for kumaoni cultural preservation ([Rai, 2022](#)).

The study illuminates the rich culture of Kumaon and the various challenges it faces like migration and linguistic decline. It also reveals the dire need to protect and preserve cultural practices and rituals amid these times of modernization and technological advancements.

CONCLUSION

The grandeur of kumaoni culture lies in its spirited festivals and rituals, vivid and evocative folklores & folk melodies and intricate patterns of its time- honoured art/ craftsmanship. This research paper offers a well-read examination of not only the kumaoni culture and rituals but also the multitudinous challenges confronting kumaon division in this tech- driven era. Using the mixed-methods approach the study revealed the kumaoni culture, rituals, folk beliefs and superstitions, cuisine, art, attire etc along with myriad challenges faced by it in this era of technological advancements. For instance, empty homes of kumaon narrating that people have migrated in huge numbers, linguistic decline and the invasion of modernity bringing transition in the culture. The study has provided with some suggestions for cultural preservations. The study has also provided for the fact that as a bastion of cultural identity, preservation of the kumaoni language is urgent and pressing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Promoting local art:** - Promoting the local aipan art of Kumaon by organising workshops in order to encourage local artisans of Kumaon to continue creating the local aipan art and training them to find creative ways of monetising the art form so that they reach a broader market.
- **Documentation:** - Documenting kumaoni cuisine, folk tales, rituals, music and language so that they can be preserved for future generations.
- **Digital documentation of kumaoni culture:** - Digital documentation will be available for global audience. People can access it from any part of the world and the reach will be high.
- **Use of social media:** - Use of social media in promoting culture will immensely help in preserving the culture. The use of social media is growing day by day and it will serve to be a very good example for generating cultural awareness.

- **Supporting urban cultural associations:** - Or Kumaon mandalis in urban areas where kumaoni people gather and celebrate festivals that are unique to their identity.
- **Promoting kumaoni language:** - Promoting kumaoni language in schools so that it can be preserved. Language is important for a culture as it is eternally linked with culture. We must protect it by not only documenting it but teaching that language to the future generations.
- **Promoting kumaoni culture in education:** - Which will not only include language but also rituals, folk tales, songs, cuisine and art forms. Teaching the values of kumaoni culture.

Conflicts of Interest

I affirm that there are no potential conflicts of interest and I agree to abide by the IJJASSAH's policies.

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