

Study on Attitude Difference among the Indigenous Groups and Settlers on Forest and Forest Conservation in Bangladeshi Hill Tracts

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Abstracts

The indigenous people of Chittagong Hill Tracts are distinct and different from the majority Bengali population of Bangladesh in respect to race, language, culture, religion, and ethnicity. Their socio-economic condition, life style, culture and religion are influenced by the forest. This study tries to identify the attitudes of the indigenous people and settlers towards forest, and finally compares the attitudes difference of these two groups in terms of the forest resources utilization and conservation. This study analyses indigenous peoples' daily forestry activities, socio-economic and cultural activities of CHT along with the dependence on forest for livelihood with a comparison to the settlers.

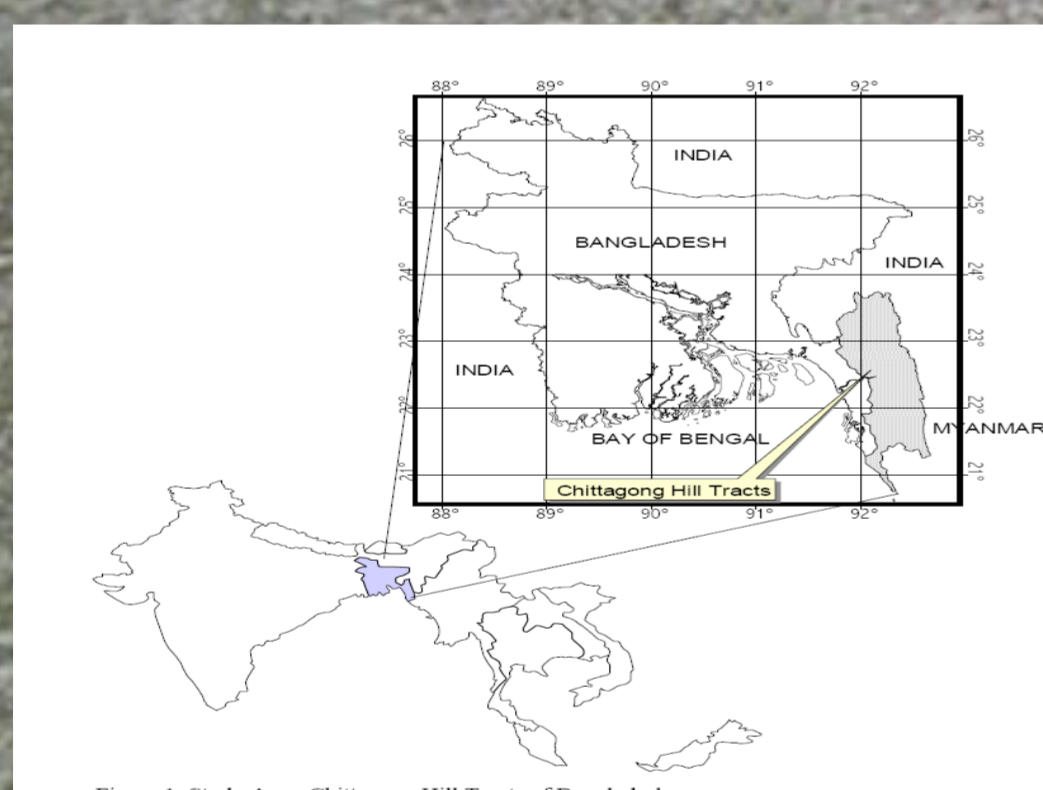
BACKGROUND

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is located in the south-eastern part of the Bangladesh, near the Myanmar and Indian border and make up 10% of the total land area of the country having only 1% of the country's population. According to the 1991 population census. Different indigenous groups of different ethnic origin represents 51% of this population. Over the last 30 years, Bengali settlers from other parts of Bangladesh have been allocated land in the CHT districts and now represent approximately 50 per cent of the CHT population. Out of the total land of the CHT, 72% land is under forestry land use practice. The total situation has become very complex in nature as the two distinct group of people is living there with very little agricultural opportunities. The forest of that particular region has been at the receiving end. Forest destruction has been the number one challenge there.

According to Eagly & Chaiken (1993) attitude is.....

'Attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor...'

So it has been already proven that, personal and group attitude plays a vital role in the decision making process of any individual or even of a society. Chittagong hill tract is characterized with diversified socio-cultural attributes with a pristine natural environment. To ensure nature conservation there, it is imperative to understand the attitudes regarding forest conservation of the two different major society, upon whose action the future of this tropical rain forest is depending.



MATERIALS AND METHODS

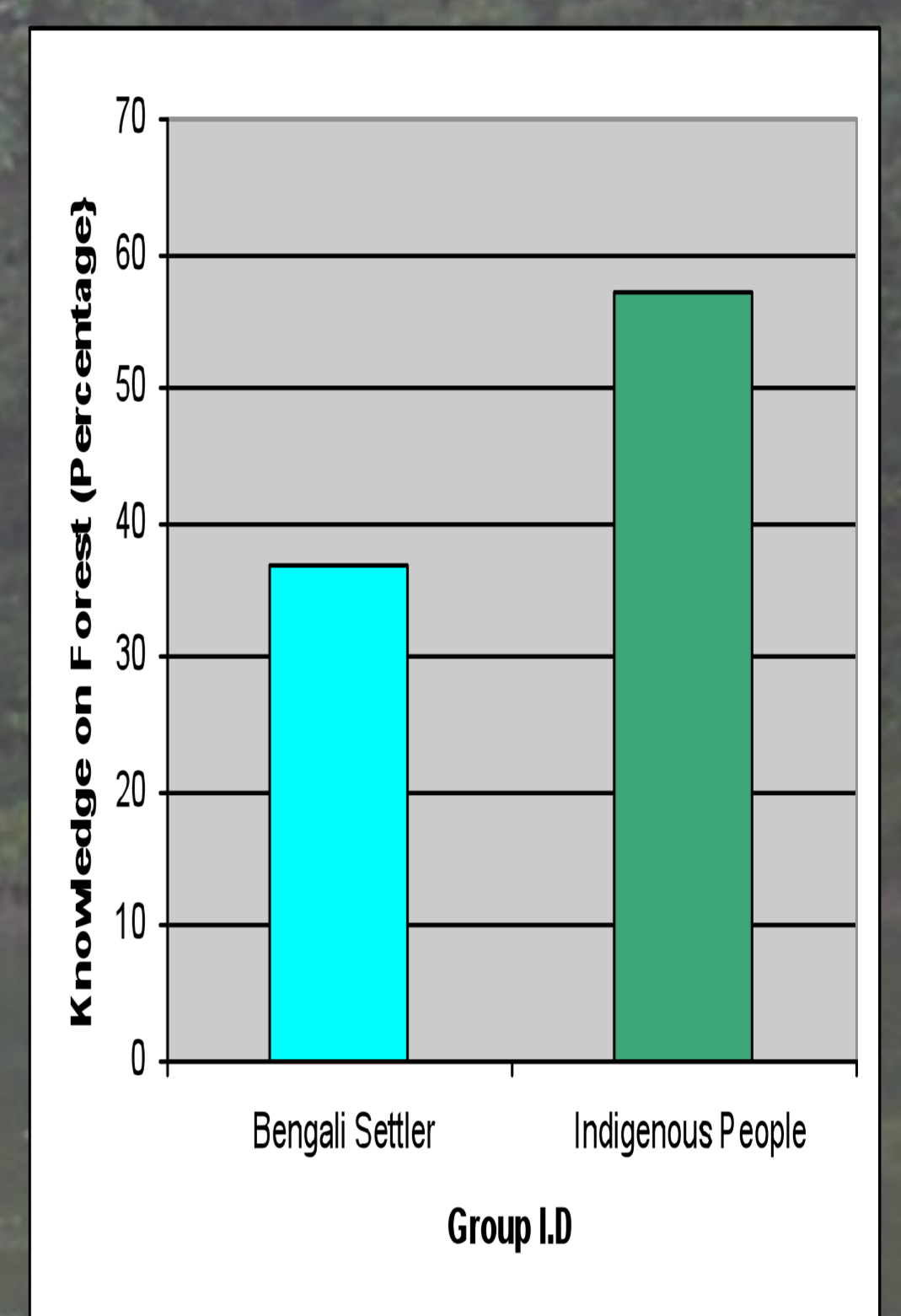
The research was qualitative in nature, where social survey technique has been used for data collection. The sample size was 300 individuals, 150 individuals from each group of the two major societies- Bengali settlers and indigenous people. According to Yen, 60 to 120 samples are handsome enough for evaluating a fact in a social survey, a higher number has been selected because of higher population density of Bangladesh.

A pretested semi structured questioner was used to collect data from the informants. Coding method was used to quantify the response of each individual respondents. Information regarding their knowledge about the forest, forest product uses, dependency on forest, and forest conservational value was collected and properly coded to get a comparative picture of the two groups of peoples' attitude towards the forest. Coded data was analyzed with the SPSS and XI package to get the final result of this study.

RESULTS

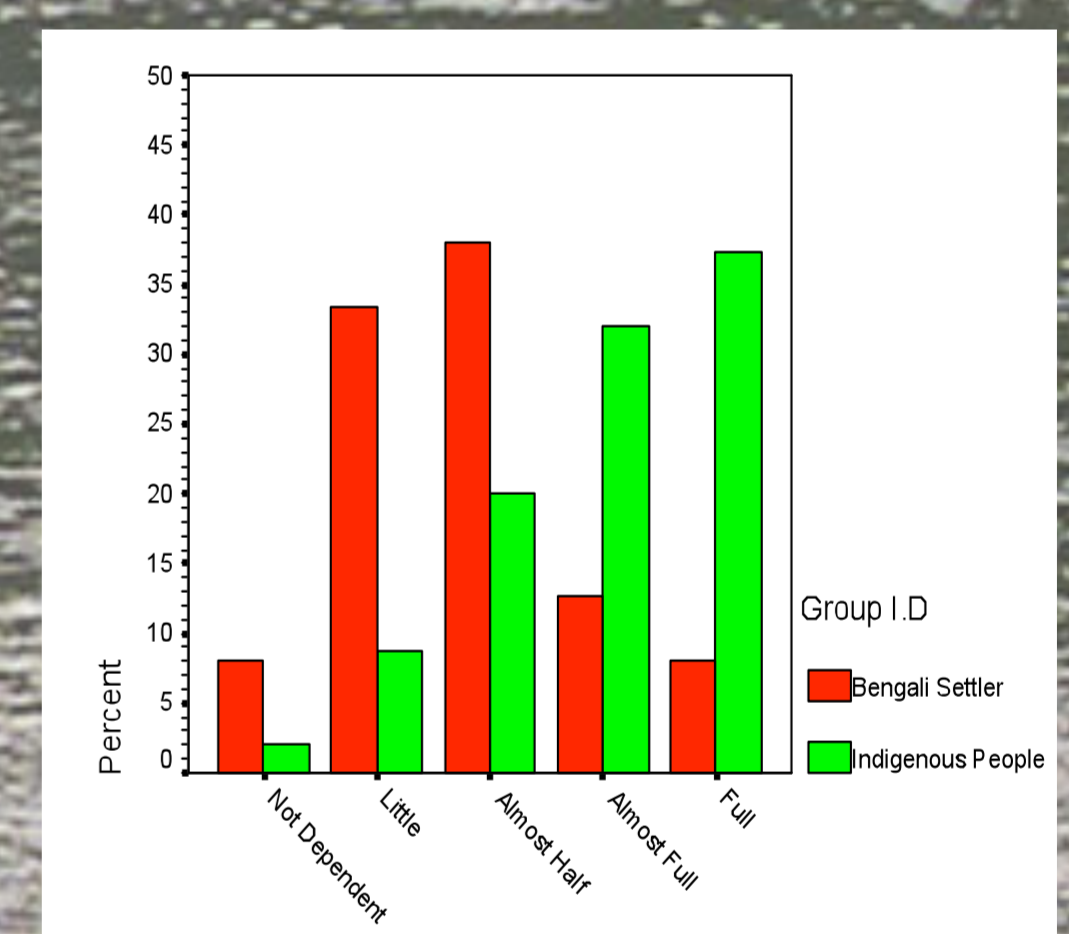
Forest Knowledge

In the aspect of knowledge regarding forest conservation, there is difference between the indigenous people and the Bengali Settlers. Here in the figure it is visible that the Bengali Settlers have less knowledge in comparison to the indigenous people. Indigenous people had been living in or around the forest for many generations, and naturally possess good knowledge regarding forest and its conservation. They have knowledge on many species and wildlife and also can able to identify the vulnerable and endangered species in the forest. On the contrary Bengali Settlers came from the different origin and places in recent past with very little knowledge about the forest and having economic rational perspective.



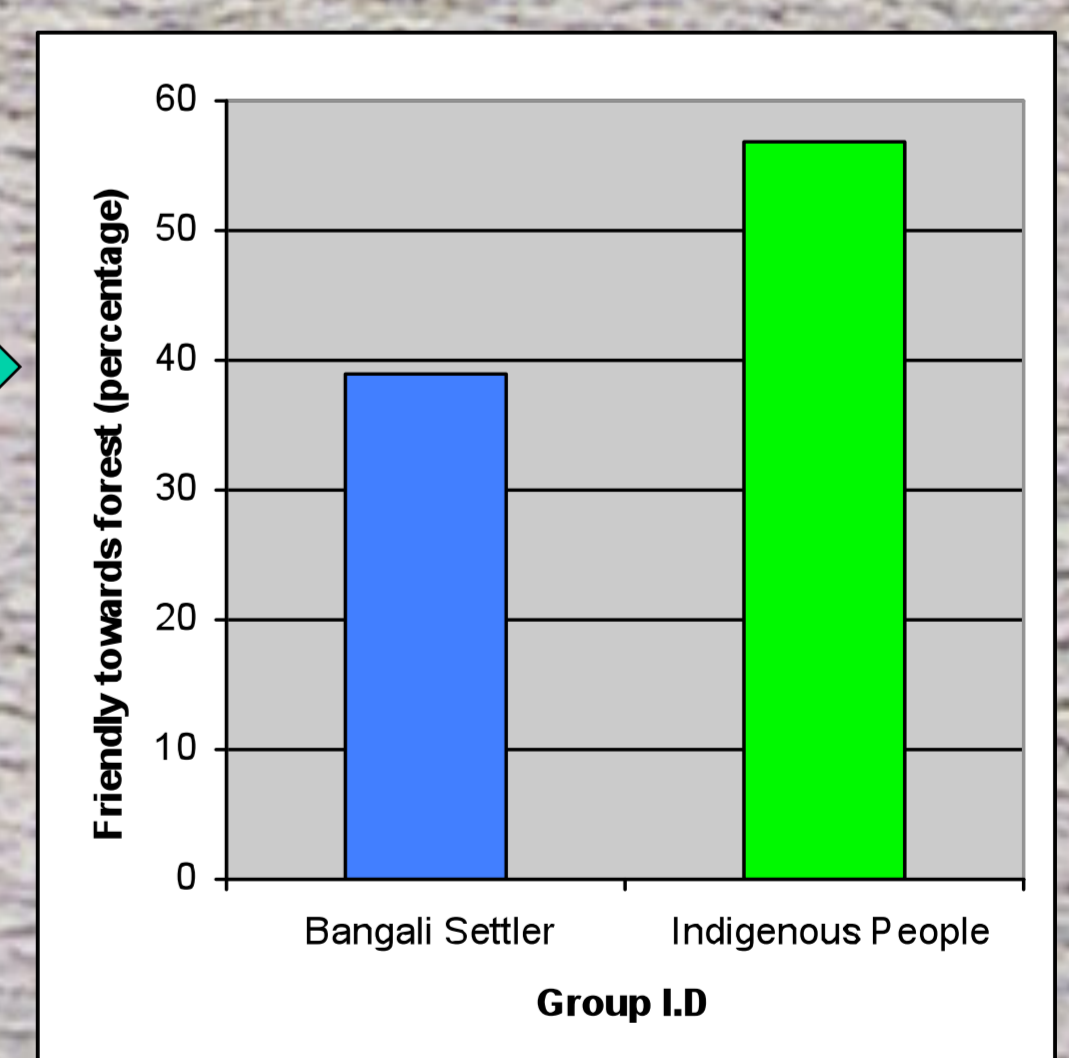
Analysis of dependency on Forest

The study reveals that there is a difference between the indigenous people and the settlers in respect of dependency on forest. It is clear that both groups live in or around the forest with a difference level of dependency on forest. In the figure it is noticeable that indigenous people is more dependent than Bengali settlers according to the different scale of dependency from not dependent to fully dependent.



Attitude towards the Forest and Forest Conservation:

The Indigenous people are distinct and different from the Bengali Settlers in respect of positive attitude towards forest. They not only utilize forest product more than the Bengali Settlers but also possess more knowledge on forest. Moreover indigenous people have more involvement in forestry activities than the Settlers. So the attitudes of indigenous people towards forest are friendlier than the Bengali Settlers as the existence of forest is imperative for their own existence.



CONCLUSIONS

From the study it is found that the prevailing knowledge about the forest and dependency on forest for living are different between the indigenous group and the settlers. The preference to choice of land use is also different between these two group. Finally the study finds that the indigenous people possess more friendly attitude towards the forest and as well as for the forest conservation in comparison to the settlers whose orientation is much more bound by economic rationality.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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