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Occupational Diversification and Livelihood Pattern of the Tribes Living in Attappady Region

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Abstract

India is a country with varied heritage and culture. Due to advancement in socio-economic structure, standard of living, life style and technology, the tribes had an overall change in all the aspects. The traditional occupation of the tribes being hunting had seen a drastic change due to the introduction of forest policies and the restriction towards hunting. The shift in occupation of tribes is based on their locations and other available opportunities. In this aspect, the present research probes to analyse the major determinants of changes in occupation of the tribes living in Attappady region of Kerala state. Purposive Random Sampling method has been adopted to select the sample respondents. The data have been collected from 67 respondents and analysed with multiple regression analysis. The result showed that gender, education and total debt of the family have significant impact on occupational diversification leading to transformation in the livelihood pattern of the select respondents in the study area.

Keywords: Livelihood, Occupational Diversification, Socio-economic Condition and Tribal People

1. Introduction

In India, the tribes are regarded as the aboriginal or indigenous people of the country. They are the oldest ethnological group of India's population and referred as Adivasis or original inhabitants. Indian tribal people constitute major part of cultural heritage of India and are considered as the true habitants of India. Indian tribal people primarily live in several places including plains, forests, hills and inaccessible areas that perhaps lie dotted in the panoramic Indian terrain. Among the tribes in India, the indigenous people are found mostly in Kerala. In the Attappady village of Kerala, the tribes belong to most backward among other under privileged group of people. Most of the tribes depend on agriculture with minimum surplus allocation within themselves. There are three groups of people namely Irulas, Mudugas and Kurumbas in Attappady. Irulas are more in number and are highly advanced people whereas Kurumbas are the most primitive people. As there is development in the technology and social life of people in general, its impact on tribal population has no exception. The livelihood pattern of tribes is also changing. Their food habits, occupational status and living pattern have seen a drastic upliftment. In this regard, the present study has been undertaken to analyse the occupational diversification and livelihood pattern of the tribes in Attappady region of Kerala.

2. Statement of the Problem

The tribes have been facing various problems of indebtedness,

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poverty and poor health and lack of education due to other category of people, NGOs and the Government. The livelihood pattern of tribes is almost equal with other people living in the rural area. The tribes lack proper livelihood system and they live in the conditions of extreme poverty, hunger and mal nutrition. In order to sustain their livelihood due to lack of proper income, they borrow a huge amount which lead to indebtedness. Thus, the present context explains about the indebtedness of the tribes. In this connection, the present study focuses on the special case of Attappady tribes living in the Palakkad district of Kerala.

3. Review of Literature

Richard Scaria et.al[1] found that 93% of the tribal people of Attappady were lived in multidimensional poor status with Kurumba community (0.097) being the highest. It was concluded that the study could enable the policy makers to overcome the problems faced by the tribal people.

Haseena and Ajims[2] examined the scope of education and level of dropout among tribal students in Kerala. It was found that the tribes were in low status and isolated both physically and socially from the Hindu population. Further, the Scheduled Tribes were treated indifferently which excluded them from educational opportunities, social participation, and access to their own land.

Sujith et.al[3] focused on the examination of development status of tribes using Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Development Index (GDI). It was found that the standard of living of nearly 90% of the tribal people is poor in Attappady village.

Haseena[4] analysed the incidence and intensity of health and nutritional problems in Attappady tribal block in Kerala. It was found that there were more number of deaths prevalent among socially marginalised groups such as tribes, fisher folk and dalits due to malnutrition.

Jalaja and Kala[5] examined the need for agriculture related data among tribal farmers in Attappady tribal block of Kerala. The study found that most of the tribal farmers were small scale farmers and illiterates. They required data on the availability of seeds, insecticides and new crop production. It was concluded that the farmers of Attappady tribal block were unable to obtain useful and reliable information.

Subathra et.al[6] analysed the effect of tribal developmental programme with respect to social, economical, cultural and health aspect in Attappady, Kerala. The researcher studied the respondents' personal profile and educational, social, economic, cultural and health conditions. It was found that maximum number of tribal people were addicted to alcohol, the government offices and health centers were very far from the tribal areas, the tribal people were travelling to Gulikadavu for trading purpose which is 25 km far from their area, primary education centres were very less in number and the tribal people were not interested to utilize the available facilities.

4. Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study include the following:

- To study the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the surveyed tribes.
- To analyse the occupational structure and the livelihood options of the tribes in the study area.
- To suggest policies to improve the livelihood options of the tribes.

5. Research Methodology

The present study is exclusively based on data collected through interview schedule from 67 tribal households of Attappady region of Kerala. A Purposive Random Sampling method is employed to select the study area and respondents. There are three familiar tribal groups living in Attappady region namely, Irula, Muduga and Kurumba. The livelihood pattern of these tribes varies from one another. So, these tribes are purposively surveyed. Even though they are living in many villages, the lowest populated villages of these three tribes Naikerpadi (Irula), Pettikkal (Muduga) and Bhoothavur (Kurumba) have been selected for the study. At the next level, all the households in the three villages are selected. Thus, the total sample of Irula (23), Muduga (20) and Kurumba (24) has been surveyed.

6. Hypothesis

H_0: The socio-economic factors do not have an impact on the current occupation of the tribes.

7. Analysis and Discussion

7.1 Profile of the Respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics of the tribes are examined with simple percentage analysis and the results are shown in Table 1.

It is seen from Table 1 that among the tribal groups, middle aged people (52.24%) are more, male dominated

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the tribes

Sl. No.	Variables	Irula	Muduga	Kurumba	Total
Age					
1	Young (<35)	5 (20.83)	5 (25.00)	10 (43.48)	20 (29.85)
2	Middle (35-60)	14 (58.33)	10 (50.00)	11 (47.83)	35 (52.24)
3	Old (>60)	5 (20.83)	5 (25.00)	2 (8.70)	12 (17.91)
Gender					
1	Male	21 (87.50)	13 (65.00)	22 (95.65)	56 (83.58)
2	Female	3 (12.50)	7 (35.00)	1 (4.34)	11 (16.41)
Marital Status					
1	Married	18 (75.00)	12 (60.00)	17 (73.91)	47 (70.15)
2	Unmarried	0 (0.00)	1 (5.00)	1 (4.35)	2 (2.99)
3	Widow	6 (25.00)	7 (35.00)	2 (8.70)	15 (22.39)
4	Widower	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (13.04)	3 (4.48)
Type of Family					
1	Nuclear	18 (75.00)	18 (90.00)	23 (100.00)	59 (88.06)
2	Joint	6 (25.00)	2 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	8 (11.94)
Literacy Level					
1	Illiterate	15 (62.50)	14 (70.00)	19 (82.61)	48 (71.64)
2	Primary	3 (12.50)	5 (25.00)	2 (8.70)	10 (14.93)
3	Secondary	5 (20.83)	1 (5.00)	2 (8.70)	8 (11.94)
4	Graduate	1 (4.17)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.49)
Total		**24 (100.00)**	**20 (100.00)**	**23 (100.00)**	**67 (100.00)**

Source: Computed.

Note: Figures in Parentheses are Percentages to the Total.

(83.58%) the female in all tribal groups. However, the share of female is little high among Muduga tribes. Most of them are married (70.15%). Type of family wise classification of the respondents show that 88% of the tribes are living in nuclear type of family and the rest 12% of the tribes are living in joint families. Though the tribes in hills are having their traditional habit of living together, most of them are living under nuclear type of family due to the housing scheme provided to them. The education status of the respondents is categorized into illiterate, primary, secondary and graduate. Illiteracy is common among all types of tribes, i.e. about 72% of the respondents are illiterates in the villages. Among the tribes also, the picture is similar. However, a few Irulas have studied up to graduation.

The distribution of the respondents based on asset value owned by them is shown in Table 2.

The distribution of asset value has been classified into four categories viz. Less than Rs. 500000, Rs. 500000 to 1000000, Rs. 1000000 to 2000000 and above Rs. 2000000. It is found from the Table 2 that nearly one third of the tribes have their asset value between Rs. 1000000 to

Table 2. Distribution of asset value of the respondents

Sl. No.	Asset (Value in Rs)	Irula	Muduga	Kurumba	Total
1	Less than 500000	7 (29.17)	12 (60.00)	3 (13.04)	22 (32.48)
2	500000 - 1000000	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	8 (34.78)	8 (11.94)
3	1000000 - 2000000	9 (37.50)	8 (40.00)	6 (26.09)	23 (34.33)
4	Above 2000000	8 (33.33)	0 (0.00)	6 (26.09)	14 (20.90)
Average		5214895.83	553250.00	1593086.96	2580052.24
Total		24 (100.00)	20 (100.00)	23 (100.00)	67 (100.00)

Source: Computed.
Note: Figures in Parentheses are Percentages to the Total.

Table 3. Source of annual income of the respondents

Sl. No.	Source	Irula	Muduga	Kurumba	Total
1	Agriculture	3 (12.50)	2 (10.00)	7 (30.43)	12 (17.91)
2	Govt. Service	2 (8.33)	2 (10.00)	4 (17.39)	8 (11.94)
3	Industrial Work	6 (25.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (4.35)	7 (10.45)
4	Agriculture Wage	17 (70.83)	11 (55.00)	17 (73.91)	45 (67.16)
5	Forest Produces	0 (0.00)	7 (35.00)	15 (65.22)	22 (32.84)

Source: Computed.
Note: Figures in Parentheses are Percentages to the Total.

2000000 and less than Rs. 500000. The average asset value is Rs. 25.80 lakhs among the tribes which is a reasonable one.

The Table 3 depicts the source of annual income of the respondents.

It is observed from Table 3 that 67.16% of the tribes are depending on the agricultural wage income. However, among Kurumba, the income from agricultural wage (73.91%) is higher than the other tribal class. In total, 11.94% of the respondents are working in government services.

The distribution of respondents based on annual income is revealed in Table 4.

Table 4 shows the distribution of income of the respondents which has been classified into four categories viz. less than Rs. 75000, Rs. 75000 to 100000, Rs. 100000 to 150000 and above Rs. 150000. It is found that 29.85% of the tribes earn an annual income of Rs. 100000 to 150000. However, in Muduga community,

Table 4. Annual income of the respondents

Sl. No.	Annual Income (in Rs.)	Irula	Muduga	Kurumba	Total
1	Less than 75000	3 (12.50)	11 (55.00)	3 (13.04)	17 (25.37)
2	75000 – 100000	5 (20.83)	2 (10.00)	8 (34.78)	15 (22.39)
3	100000 – 150000	7 (29.17)	4 (20.00)	9 (39.13)	20 (29.85)
4	Above 150000	9 (37.50)	3 (15.00)	3 (13.04)	15 (22.39)
Average		126958.33	89200.00	106739.13	108746.27
Total		**24 (100.00)**	**20 (100.00)**	**23 (100.00)**	**67 (100.00)**

Source: Computed.

Note: Figures in Parentheses are Percentages to the Total.

Table 5. Annual expenditure of the respondents

Sl. No.	Expenditure (Value in Rs.)	Irula	Muduga	Kurumba	Total
1	Less than 75000	7 (29.17)	12 (60.00)	6 (26.09)	25 (37.31)
2	75000 - 100000	6 (25.00)	5 (25.00)	8 (34.78)	19 (28.36)
3	100000 - 150000	6 (25.00)	1 (5.00)	7 (30.43)	14 (20.90)
4	Above 150000	5 (20.83)	2 (10.00)	2 (8.70)	9 (13.43)
Average		100625	78350	95565	92238
Total		**24 (100.00)**	**20 (100.00)**	**23 (100.00)**	**67 (100.00)**

Source: Computed.

Note: Figures in Parentheses are Percentages to the Total.

majority of 55% of the respondents earn low income than the other tribal class.

The level of expenditure of the respondents is shown in Table 5.

The Table 5 shows that 37.31% of the tribes have their expenditure as less than Rs. 75000 followed by 28.36% of tribes spending between Rs. 75000 and Rs.100000 and only 13% of the respondents are spending above Rs. 150000. The average annual expenditure of the tribes is Rs. 92238.

The change of occupation by the respondents is depicted in Table 6.

The Table 6 shows that all the respondents have changed their occupation, due to their poor income from traditional works and inability in marketing their products. The change of occupation by the respondents is given in Table 7.Table 7 explains that 97.01% of the tribes have changed their occupation into wage labour from traditional occupation. Only 1% of the respondents have moved into business or other works. It is revealed that all the Muduga and Kurumba respondents have turned as wage laborers.

7.2 Impact of Socio-economic Factors on Current Occupation Status

The various socio-economic factors namely age, gender, education level, family size, asset held, source of annual income and total debt are considered to evaluate their impact on current occupational status. Table 8 reveals the results of the analysis.

To predict the determinants of current occupation, the selected variables have been analyzed with the help of multiple linear regression model. The dependent variable used is current occupation and the independent variables are the socio-economic factors. It is seen from the results given in Table 8 that the F-ratio 4.496 is significant at 1% level and states that the model fits well. The R^2 value 0.348 represents that the independent variables given in

Table 6. Change of occupation among the respondents

Sl. No.	Change of Occupation	Irula	Muduga	Kurumba	Total
1	Yes	24 (100.00)	20 (100.00)	23 (100.00)	67 (100.00)
Total		**24 (100.00)**	**20 (100.00)**	**23 (100.00)**	**67 (100.00)**

Source: Computed.
Note: Figures in Parentheses are Percentages to the Total.

Table 7. Changes from traditional occupation to current occupation

Sl. No.	Occupation	Irula	Muduga	Kurumba	Total
1	Wage Labour	22 (91.67)	20 (100.00)	23 (100.00)	65 (97.01)
2	Business	1 (4.17)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.49)
3	Others	1 (4.17)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.49)
Total		**24 (100.00)**	**20 (100.00)**	**23 (100.00)**	**67 (100.00)**

Source: Computed.
Note: Figures in Parentheses are Percentages to the Total.

Table 8. Multiple linear regression model predicting current occupation

Sl. No.	Independent Variables	Beta	T	Sig.
1	Constant	.547	1.534	.130
2	Age	.011	.120	.905
3	Gender	.290	1.950	.056*
4	Education Level	.320	4.221	.000*
5	Family Size	-.028	-.265	.792
6	Asset Held	.000	-1.583	.119
7	Source of Annual Income	.000	1.152	.254
8	Total Debt	.000	-1.952	.056*
R^2		.348		
F		4.496		.000*

*- Significant

the model together determines the current occupation by 34.8%.

Among the various independent variables, education level is significant at 1% level, while gender and total debt are significant at 5% level. It reveals that if the household head is male then there will be a possibility of changing the occupation. If they are educated well, then the tribes prefer to change their occupation, or if the family is in debt then the tribes may change their occupation. Thus, the stated hypothesis is partially validated as the present occupation is influenced by both social and economic factors.

8. Suggestions

In view of the above findings, the following policy suggestions are made:

- The study shows that the tribes are willing to change their occupation. Hence, it is suggested that to increase employment opportunities, the Government should provide market to sell the forest products by the tribes.
- Government should also have to take steps to control the landlords' influence on tribes.

9. Conclusion

The present study analyses the livelihood pattern of Irula, Muduga and Kurumba community in Attappady region of Kerala. Though general literacy level of Kerala is high, the majority of tribes are illiterates. The present level of debt and the level of education have to some extent forced them to change their occupation to improve their livelihood. The natural resources from forest are also supplementing their livelihood pattern. They depend mostly on agricultural wage for their livelihood. However, Muduga tribes still believe that forest may provide a better livelihood for them. So, it is suggested that the tribes may be educated well and the government has to provide some livelihood option for better standard of living of these tribes.

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